TEACHERS OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE OF ONTARIO

TESL ONTARIO Vol. 35 No. 1
March 2009

Contact is published three times a year by Teachers of English as a Second Language of Ontario.

Contact

ISSN 0227-2938

From the Editor 2

FALL CONFERENCE

Rethinking L1 in the ESL/EFL Classroom 8
By James Corcoran

Using Documentaries to Motivate Students Through Critical Thinking and Inquiry 14
By Celina Costa and Dorothy van Grootheest

The Newspaper in Education 23
By Andrew Nicholson

Compassion Fatigue 27
Speaker: Jane Gilbert

Immigrant Success: 7 Steps 30
Speaker: Nick Noorani

Extensive Reading as Language Entry Point 33
Speaker: Jim Cummins

Managing Change 37
Speaker: Peter de Jager

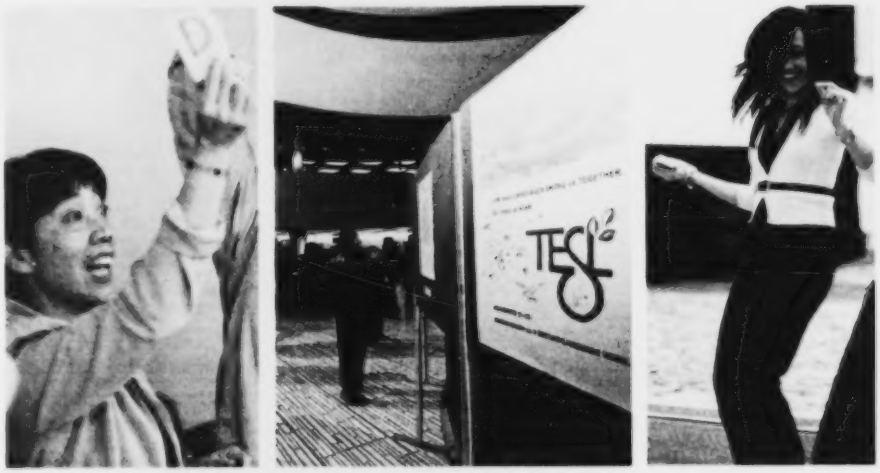
Students and Autonomous Learning 41
By Robert Courchêne

IN THE CLASSROOM: 49
Effective Strategies in High School ESL Reading Programs – Dialogic Reading

Third Annual TESL Ontario Panel Discussion 54

Technology Overload 72
By John Allan

The WOW! Factor



The 2008 TESL Ontario Fall Conference: lively workshops, meet-and-greet reception in the rotunda of Toronto city hall, poster contest winner, and dancing up a storm.

When TESL Ontario Conference Chair Barb Krukowski and her committee were considering a new venue for the 36th Annual Conference, a number of criteria came into play. The site's amenities and larger size, with a central location in downtown Toronto, were important, true. But another criterion also became a consideration - the Wow! Factor. And the new location at the Sheraton Centre Hotel, across from Toronto City Hall, had that in spades.

Over the three days of the conference, more than 1600 delegates attended 200 workshop sessions tailored to the needs and interests of ESL professionals in adult ESL, LINC, elementary and secondary schools, and colleges and universities. In support of teachers' professional development, Citizenship and Immigration Canada provided conference assistance for 800 LINC and 60 ELT instructors, and the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration supported conference registration for 200 ESL teachers.

The annual research symposium, organized by Bob Courchêne of the OLBI and the University of Ottawa and Hedy McGarrell from Brock University, featured papers on four broad

(Continued on page 5)

From the Editor

This issue of *Contact*, like the 36th Annual TESL Ontario Conference which it documents, celebrates the declaration of The International Year of Languages by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

As stated by UNESCO, languages have complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development. In this respect, they are of strategic importance for people and the planet. They provide a rich tapestry of cultural diversity and unique modes of thinking and expression.

We begin with reports on three Fall Conference workshop sessions. In the first, **James Corcoran** of OISE/UT, examines an issue faced by virtually all English language teachers: 'should I encourage or discourage the use of learners' first languages in my ESL/EFL classroom?' He summarizes the research and lays out the arguments pro and con. Conference-goers who attended Corcoran's session left the presenter with some questions to take away and ponder. He returned with some opinions and answers in this follow-up article.

The second report describes an eight-week language learning module organized at George Brown College for international English students by instructors **Celina Costa** and **Dorothy van Grootheest**. The course content is organized around the use of

(Continued on page 3)

Contact us

Contact welcomes articles of general interest to association members, including announcements, reports, articles, calls for papers and news items.

Contributors should include their full name, title and affiliation. Text should be e-mailed to: teslontario@telus.net or mailed on CD to:

Editor, TESL Association of Ontario,
27 Carlton Street, Suite 405,
Toronto, Ontario, M5B 1L2

Deadlines are Jan. 30, Apr.30 and June 30.

TESL Ontario's phone numbers are: (416) 593-4243, Fax (416) 593- 0164. The web-site is at: www.teslontario.org

Inquiries regarding membership or change of address should be addressed to the TESL Ontario Membership Coordinator at teslmembership@telus.net

Inquiries regarding advertising rates and reservation of advertising space should be addressed to the Office Coordinator at teslontario@telus.net.

The statements made and opinions expressed in articles are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the policies of TESL Ontario.

Acceptance of advertising does not constitute endorsement by TESL Ontario nor guarantee accuracy of information therein.

(Continued from page 2)

film documentaries on current social, political, environmental and economic issues. The instructional focus is on language development, the enhancement of critical thinking skills and visual literacy, in an effort to prepare students for more advanced academic work at the university and college levels.

Andrew Nicholson, the Newspaper in Education Coordinator at the Toronto *Sun*, has also been the three-term Chair of the Canadian Newspaper in Education Association. His workshop was an interactive session for teachers of intermediate and literacy level adult learners. The session engaged teachers in a model hands-on classroom activity exploring some of the benefits of using the newspaper in the classroom. The buzz of busy teachers in the room spoke to their excitement about adding a new resource to their instructional repertoire.

Regular contributor **Robert Courchêne** of the University of Ottawa and the Official Language and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI) addresses a topic of high interest at present in second language education: learner autonomy. He surveys a broad range of theory and practice, laying the groundwork for all language instructors who wish to encourage more learner autonomy in their programs, and presents a model of learner autonomy as an interaction of the teacher's role, students' engagement and the use of appropriate learning materials, in a supportive context.

In our regular *In the Classroom* feature, **Chadwick Low**, a secondary school ESL teacher with the Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board, discovered, somewhat by chance, an interactive approach to reading instruction developed originally by Dr. Grover Whitehurst in the U.S. Department of Education for teachers of young children. Applying the principles and practices of 'dialogic reading' in his tenth-grade classroom, he found that the process worked well as they read the novella, *The Pearl*, by Nobel Prize-winning author, John Steinbeck.

> "...languages have complex implications for identity, communication, social integration, education and development."

This year's conference included four Plenary session speakers. **Jane Bradley**, an expert in compassion fatigue, presented teachers with practical advice about their own mental and spiritual health. **Nick Noorani**, the publisher of Canadian Immigrant magazine described seven success secrets for immigrants. **Professor Jim Cummins** of OISE/UT examined the practice of extensive reading as an effective entry point for the development of language proficiency in second language classrooms. Finally, consultant and author **Peter de Jager** analyzed the elements involved in the process of change, offering suggestions for its implementation.

TESL Ontario's 3rd Annual **Panel Discussion** brought together five informed pre-

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

senters, focusing on emerging issues in language learning. The overflow audience peppered the panelists with questions, opinions and even challenges, a sure sign that the discussion was stimulating, informative and thought-provoking.

Naomi Alboim, policy consultant at Queen's University looked at the cumulative impact of changes in Canada's immigration policies. **Wilma Jenkins** of Citizenship and Immigration Canada pointed to the positive contributions already resulting from the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement of 2005 and the ongoing process of identifying gaps and solving challenges as they emerge.

Catherine Finlay, from Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, drew attention to the need for collaboration among all the key partners and stakeholders to help achieve successful integration of Ontario's newcomers.

Patti Redmond focused on the coordination of initiatives in the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, to aid the language training of newcomers, especially in learner assessment and flexibility of access to programs.

And finally, **Pauline McNaughton** of Ontario's Ministry of Education reported on innovations at the secondary level to engage adult learners, and a number of pilot projects across the province, including recognition for seven heritage languages for academic credit.

In the final article, **John Allan** looks at the array of technologies now available to second language teachers and poses the question; 'have ESL/EFL instructors reached the point of technological overload?'

Every issue of *Contact* is a collaboration. We want to thank all those who contributed articles, reports, classroom ideas and suggestions for this issue, and encourage teachers with special stories to tell and classroom experiences to share to consider contributing to *Contact* in the future.

Your life and work in this most satisfying of endeavours is important to the professional development not only of yourself but to all of us engaged in second language teaching and learning.

And to Bob Courchêne, as ever, we owe our deepest thanks, for his continuing engagement with our efforts at *Contact* to keep TESL Ontario's members and others professionally informed. ■

Clayton Graves

WOW! Factor (continued from Page 1)

(Continued from page 1)

themes: immigrants and mental health; the role of first languages in English language learning; the integration of language and content through form-focused instruction in content-based language programs; and the state of the art in standardized language tests.

As TESL Ontario Executive Director Renate Tilson noted, this year's conference was one of 63 UN-sanctioned events around the world celebrating UNESCO's International Year of Languages in 2008.

An important opportunity for delegates to meet informally came at the President's reception in the lobby of Toronto's City Hall. The

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

rotunda was decorated for the occasion by an attractive display of posters celebrating ESL Week in Ontario, and special recognition was given to the poster contest winners.

The conference also welcomed four plenary speakers. The first, Jane Bradley addressed the issue of compassion fatigue in teachers' lives, offering an array of personal strategies for mental, physical and spiritual health. Professor Jim Cummins of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education proposed extensive reading as perhaps the most useful entry point for many learners to acquire and develop the other literacy skills. Nick Noorani, the publisher of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine described seven secrets to successful integration of immigrants to Canada and the important role of English teachers in that process. And finally, consultant and author Peter de Jager challenged our thinking about the process of change, encouraging us to develop, nurture and use the 'soft skills' demanded in the sometimes stressful context of organizational change.

Friday morning's panel discussion brought together five leaders in education to share their insights as they addressed the theme of emerging issues in language learning. Naomi Alboim of Queen's University, Wilma Jenkins of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Patti Redmond from the Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, Pauline McNaughton from the Ontario Ministry of Education, and Catherine Finlay of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration identified some of the current trends affecting language learning, reported on initiatives already in progress and shared ideas about future directions. Once again, a lively follow-up question and answer session followed their presentations.

Over the three days of the conference, teachers were also able to update their technological skills through sessions in the technology fair. And the more than 40 publishers' exhibits of new teaching and learning materials drew enthusiastic teachers to the display hall.

Webcasting of more than 60 hours of presentations also makes highlights of the conference available to teachers who were not able to attend the sessions in person.

On Friday evening, conference goers enjoyed the opportunity to meet, greet, mingle, relax and network at the annual dinner. Later, they thrilled to the sounds of the Sultans of String, their irresistible rhythms compelling many to hit the dance floor.

From every perspective the 36th Annual Conference was a huge success. Congratulations go to the Conference Committee, the office personnel, the many volunteers and presenters and all others who contributed to this important event in the life and work of ESL professionals across the province. ■

Images © 2008 by Wolf Kutnahorsky
www.wolfphotos.ca

Visit the 2008 TESL Ontario photo gallery online at
http://www.teslontario.org/album08
for more moments from our fall conference.

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Rethinking L1 Use in the ESL/EFL Classroom

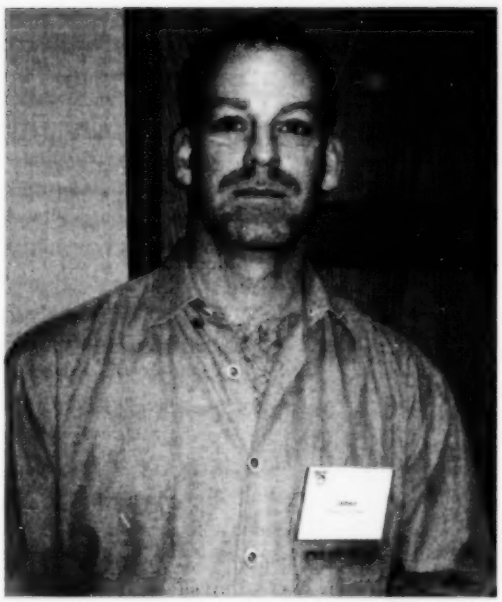
Session Presenter: James Corcoran
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

A summary of dominant approaches to English Language Teaching (ELT), review of the theoretical and empirical research into L1 use, overview of research findings from a recent study at two private Brazilian EFL schools, and some implications for ESL/EFL teachers working in homogeneous and heterogeneous L1 classroom contexts.

As an ESL/EFL teacher of adults in both Canada and Brazil, I have often worked in classrooms with students who share a mother tongue (L1). One of the issues that consistently arises in such situations is the extent to which the teacher incorporates the learner's L1 into classroom activities, if at all. At different times in my career I have bounced from one position to the other, from feeling that the L1 has little to no place in my classroom to — more recently — sensing that the L1 is an invaluable tool for teachers and students alike. Interest in the issue led me to carry out research into the matter.

This article outlines a presentation I made recently at the TESL Ontario Fall 2008 Annual Conference. It includes a historical summary of dominant approaches to English Language Teaching (ELT), a brief review of the theoretical and empirical research into L1 use, an overview of the research findings from a recent study carried out at two private Brazilian EFL schools, and some implications for ESL/EFL teachers working in homogeneous and hetero-

(Continued on page 9)



James Corcoran is an ESL/EFL teacher and full-time doctoral student in the Second Language Education Department at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education –University of Toronto.

(Continued from page 8)

geneous L1 classroom contexts. The article concludes with responses to some challenging questions that arose following my presentation.

Historical perspective

Several factors during the late 19th and 20th centuries contributed to the domination of monolingual teaching practices in English Language Teaching (ELT). These included colonial and neocolonial policies, 'centre' bias, and a backlash against the Grammar-Translation Method. Alongside the spread of English and ELT, monolingual instructional practice has continued to flourish, with British colonial and neocolonial policies greatly impacting the ELT profession (Pennycook,1994). These policies assumed English as inherently superior to languages used in the so-called developing world, with native English speakers (NES) and Native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) occupying the dominant positions within the profession. An overwhelming bias towards the superiority of 'centre' professionals (primarily in the U.K. and U.S.A), including both researchers and teachers, also greatly aided the rise to prominence of monolingual instruction (Phillipson, 1992).

Monolingual instruction in ELT has been the norm since the end of the 19th century, when the Direct Method (based on first language acquisition) usurped the Grammar-translation Method (based on translation between first and foreign languages) as the predominant approach to language teaching (Yu, 2000). The appearance of the Direct Method contributed greatly to the consolidation of the idea that all L1s should be excluded from the classroom. In fact, over the past century few have challenged the superiority of the Direct Method principle that language can best be learnt through exclusive use of the target language — an *intralingual* approach - as opposed to comparing and contrasting it with the learner's L1 — an *interlingual* approach (Stern, 1983). The Direct Method, although not wholly embraced by the ELT profession, formed the basis for numerous other monolingual methods that would come to dominate the profession to the present day.

The next 'best method' to appear in ESL/EFL teaching was Audiolingualism in the 1950s and 1960s. The Audiolingual method proposed leaving the L1 "inactive" while learning the L2. This method, which enjoyed widespread popularity in ELT classrooms worldwide from the 1950s to the 1980s (including throughout Brazil), was influenced by research advocating the compartmentalization of languages in the learning process (Hawks, 2001).

The past 30 years have seen a mix of monolingual approaches fused together under the banner of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). With its focus on speaking, CLT has enjoyed wide acceptance in the ELT world, with both ESL and EFL institutions claiming to employ the approach. Although more recent methods, such as the Communicative Method and the Task-based Approach do not overtly exclude the L1 from the classroom, the L1 is typically mentioned only when describing avoidance of its use (Cook, 2001).

Support for Excluding the L1

The ascent of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), an approach introduced in Great Britain in the 1960s, has had a significant impact on teachers' beliefs about L1 use in the EFL classroom. CLT proposes virtually exclusive use of the target language, in an effort to provide an authentic, "student-centred" learning experience (Long, 1991). Indeed, CLT embodies a method that includes the three main arguments for either excluding or ignoring the L1 in the language classroom:

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

1. The learning of an L2 should model the learning of an L1 (through maximum exposure to the L2);
2. Successful learning involves the separation and distinction of L1 and L2;
3. Students should be shown the importance of the L2 through its continual uses. (Cook, 2001, p. 412)

Although it is hard to argue against the benefits associated with continual exposure to the L2, the first two arguments have little empirical evidence to support them, but they have nevertheless remained pervasive in the ELT profession, in both research and teaching.

More recently, there has been a softening of the approach of proponents of L1 exclusion. This view is expressed by Nation (1997), who states that "second language use in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximized *wherever possible*, by encouraging its use and using it for classroom management" (p. 214). Nation concedes that the L1 has a "small, but important role to play in communicating meaning and content" (p. 214).

Turnbull (2001) echoes the belief that maximum target language (TL) use is vital in the foreign language classroom, stating that teachers and students must use the TL almost exclusively due to the limited time students receive in class to use the language being studied. Again, Turnbull grants a limited, but important place for "judicious" uses of the L1, but also warns against teachers becoming dependent on the L1 and thereby wasting valuable class time and diminishing student motivation to use the TL.

Turnbull further states that "licensing" teachers to use the L1 in EFL classrooms (Cook, 2001) endangers the language teaching process and ultimately leads to too few actions carried out in the TL .

Support for Including the L1

> Useful as it may be to employ the L1 sparingly, this tenet has no straightforward theoretical rationale. The pressure from this mostly unacknowledged anti-L1 attitude has prevented language teaching from looking rationally at ways in which the L1 can be involved in the classroom. (Cook, 2001, p. 412)

Theoretical and empirical evidence from the fields of bilingualism, foreign language acquisition (FLA) and second language acquisition (SLA) have provided evidence of both cognitive and affective benefits of L1 inclusion.

From the field of bilingualism, for example, Cummins' Interdependence Principle is instructive in that it provides evidence of a "common underlying proficiency" that enables cross-linguistic transfer of academic/cognitive literacy skills (1981).

This principle seems to fly in the face of any theory that presumes the superiority or correctness of separating languages from one another in the learning process. Further studies from the field of bilingualism show the cognitive benefits of teachers using students' L1s as a tool in the learning process.

Recent studies into L1 use in the ESL classroom, for example, have found the L1 useful for students in a myriad of ways: by reducing the cognitive load during vocabulary acquisition, enabling peer help/translation, assisting teacher/student social interaction, explaining classroom activities, monitoring comprehension, guiding bilingual dictionary work, increasing efficiency, focusing attention, and facilitating interpersonal interactions (Anton & DiCamilla, 2000; Lucas & Katz, 1994; Macaro,

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

2005; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

A significant source of criticism of a monolingual approach is now emerging from both adult and child ESL research. Cummins et al. (2001) provide a poignant example of how using the L1, in this case through dual-language storybooks, can aid in accessing students' prior knowledge and affirming minority students' identities. The 2001 study is particularly important in that it affirms student L1 use and the subsequent use of available resources as valid classroom activities whose goal is to involve students who have little TL knowledge in an English-medium classroom.

Other theorists have attacked the monolingual approach to ESL and EFL teaching for being "rooted in a particular ideological perspective, being largely unexamined and reinforcing societal inequities" (Auerbach, 1993, p.9), stifling the students' "most intense existential experience" (Phillipson, 1992, p.189), leading to "alienation of the learners, depriving them of their cultural identity, and leading to acculturation rather than increased intercultural communicative competence" (Phillipson, 1992, p.193).

My MA Thesis Findings

Turning from a general perspective on the issue of L1 language use in EFL contexts to a specific case, in the summer of 2007 I carried out a study at two private Brazilian EFL schools. The main question was: 'why do teachers include, exclude, or ignore the L1 in the adult EFL classroom?' I investigated teacher beliefs about L1 use through the use of classroom observations, an online survey, interviews, and group discussions. The following section outlines the general findings from this study.

Perhaps the most striking finding is that not one of the 25 teachers/teacher-administrators who participated in the study claimed to completely exclude the students' L1 from their classroom practice.

Indeed, as became apparent after analysis of the teacher survey, even the most ardent supporter of exclusive target language use in the adult EFL classroom still believed in occasional teacher and/or student L1 use.

As became clearer after the classroom observations, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, occasional or 'judicious' L1 use was much more judicious with some teachers than others, for a variety of reasons.

Ultimately, teachers reported using the TL (English) approximately 60 to 100% of the time, with the average being 85%, depending on a host of factors, most significantly student TL proficiency level.

This is a list of the reasons (in order of importance) why teachers restricted L1 use in the adult EFL classroom:

(a) It limits opportunities for student exposure to the TL.
(b) The importance of students' learning negotiation strategies in the TL.
(c) Student demand for TL use.
(d) Avoidance of 'opening the floodgates' to rampant L1 use in class
(e) Prior teacher TL learning experiences.
(f) Learners' TL proficiency level.
(g) Discouragement of translation.
(h) Avoidance of focus on grammar.
(i) Teacher TL proficiency.
(j) Teacher education.
(k) Institutional policy.

A second list (in order of importance) gives reasons why teachers included the L1 in the adult EFL classroom:

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

(a) Low student TL proficiency
(b) Time-saving (instructions/ translations).
(c) Helpful for grammar instruction.
(d) Student demand for L1.
(e) Classroom discipline
(f) To develop and maintain teacher-student relationships.
(g) Low teacher TL proficiency.
(h) Prior learning experience of teacher.
(i) Teacher education.
(j) Institutional policy.

Implications for ESL/EFL Teachers

At this point you may be asking yourself: what does this have to do with me as a classroom teacher here in Ontario? Based on a review of the literature, the findings from my research and personal classroom teaching experience, I would suggest that teachers in all settings and from all age and proficiency levels reconsider excluding classroom L1 use, and in fact encourage it in the following ways:

1. *Show respect for student mother tongues* by removing "English-only" signs from classroom walls and consider replacing them with 'welcome' messages in a variety of other languages (students may, in fact, be quite eager to help in this task).
2. *Get to know your students.* Do a needs assessment at the beginning of your time with students to find what linguistic and cultural tools they bring to the language learning endeavor.
3. Assuming it is "on-task" communication, *allow students who share an L1 to aid each other* in the second language learning process.
4. *Reflect on the L1 use that occurs in your classroom.* For example, how much L1 is being used? Is it positively or negatively affecting student learning outcomes? How can I better use (or allow students to use) L1s to positively affect learning outcomes?

Tough Questions

These are some of the challenging questions posed following my presentation at the 2008 TESL Ontario conference.

How much is too much L1 use?

One cannot overstress the context-specific nature of this question. If you are a LINC Level 2 teacher with several newcomers to Canada sharing an L1, you may consider incorporating a significant amount of L1 into the classroom. However, if you are teaching an advanced-level class at a private language school, you may want to incorporate the L1 sparingly.

What if I do not speak another language or do not share an L1 with any of my students?

This is not an uncommon situation. In this case, keep a close eye on how students are using the L1 and reflect on how their L1 use is facilitating or hampering your efforts to help them learn the target language. Also, although this may not be feasible for some, perhaps it is time to consider actively engaging ourselves in the language learning experience by studying a second or other language. After all, this is what we ask of our students.

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

What if I share an L1 with one or two of my students, but other students think it rude when I use the L1 with them?

A situation like this calls for sensitivity. First, you might explain to the class at the beginning of the course that you possess certain linguistic resources which you may use at times in class with students who share these resources. Second, you might wish to use the L1 in transparent ways (e.g. short and quick translations) so as not to leave students who do not share the L1 wondering what the interaction is about.

Concluding Remarks

Firstly, I encourage all teachers to discuss the issue of L1 use in the ESL/EFL classroom with colleagues, including other teachers and administrators. Critical reflection and discussion of L1 use will surely benefit teachers and students alike.

Secondly, for anyone interested in exploring this important issue more deeply, I am happy to forward a complete list of references as well as a copy of my conference PowerPoint presentation. You may contact me at: jcorcoran@oise.utoronto.ca. ■

References

Anton, M., & DiCamilla, F. (1998). Socio-cognitive functions of L1 collaborative interaction in the L2 classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 54*, 414-42.

Auerbach, E. (1993). Reexamining English only in the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly, 27* (1), 9-32.

Atkinson, D. (1987). The mother tongue in the classroom: a neglected resource? *ELTJournal, 41* (4), 241-247.

Cook, V. (2001). Using the first language in the classroom. *Canadian Modern Language Review, 57*, 402-423.

Cook, V. (2005). Basing teaching on the L2 User. In E. Llurda (Ed.) *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession*. New York: Springer.

Cummins, J. (1981). The role of primary language development in promoting educational success for language minority students. In California State Department of Education (Ed.), *Schooling and language minority students: A theoretical framework*. Evaluation, Dissemination and Assessment Center, California State University, Los Angeles.

Cummins, J., Bismilla, V., Chow, P., Cohen, S., Giampapa, F., Leoni, L. et al. (2005). Affirming identity in multilingual classrooms. *Educational Leadership, 63* (1), 38-43.

Howatt, A. (1984). *A history of English language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Long, M.H. (1991). Focus on form: A design feature in language teaching methodology. In K. de Bot, R. Ginsberg, & C. Kramsch (Eds.). *Foreign language research in cross-cultural perspectives*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Lucas, T. & Katz, A. (1994). Reframing the debate: The roles of native languages in English-only programs for language minority students. *TESOL Quarterly, 28*, 537-562.

Macaro, E. (2005). Codeswitching in the L2 classroom: A communication and learning strategy. In E. Llurda (Ed.) *Non-native language teachers: Perceptions, challenges and contributions to the profession*. NewYork: Springer.

Nation, P. (1997). L1 and L2 use in the classroom. *Jyvaskyla Cross-Language Studies, 12*, 209-214.

Pennycook, A. (1994). *The cultural politics of English as an International Language*. Longman: London & New York.

Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Stern, H. H. (1983). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Swain, M. & Lapkin, S. (2000). Task-based second language learning: the uses of the first language. *Language Teaching Research. 4*, 251-274.

Turnbull, M. (2001). There is a role for the L1 in second and foreign language teaching, but...*Canadian Modern Language Review, 57*, 531-540.

Yu, W. (2000). Direct method. In Byram, M. (Ed.). *Routledge Encyclopedia of language teaching and learning*, 176-178. New York: Routledge.

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Using Documentaries to Motivate Students Through Critical Thinking and Inquiry

Presenters: Celina Costa and Dorothy van Grootheest
George Brown College, Toronto

An eight-week module of study for international second language students at George Brown College uses film documentaries as its primary learning medium rather than conventional text material.

The principal goals of this multimedia-focused course are to enhance students' critical thinking skills and develop visual literacy as part of their preparation for college and university courses.

Pitched at a CLB level of 7-8, the course contributes to thought and language development across the four modalities of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

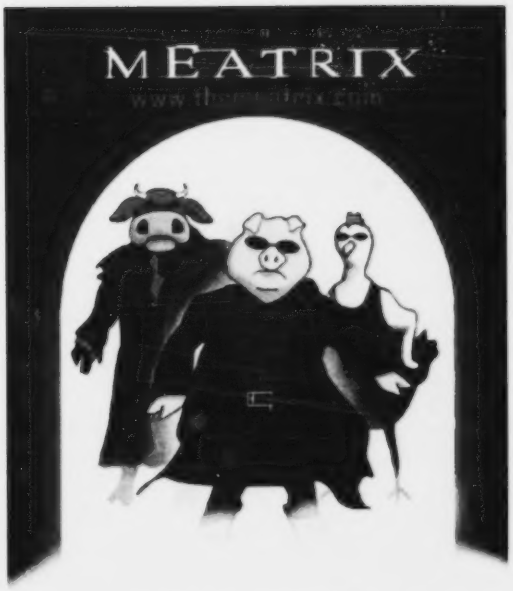
The documentaries used in the course explore social and economic issues and are chosen for their high interest level, their prominence in public discourse and their relevance to students' lives.

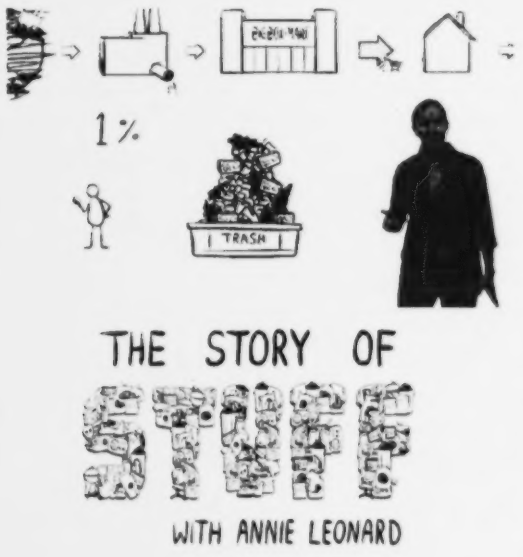
The hope is that the more stimulating and relevant the themes are to learners, the higher will be their motivation and in addition their language learning and visual literacy will be enhanced.

(Continued on page 15)

Dorothy van Grootheest has been teaching ESL to adults for over 12 years. She holds a B.A and B.Ed. and is completing her M.Ed. at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education – University of Toronto

Celina Costa has taught ESL to adults for over 12 years. She holds a B.A., B. Ed. and M.Ed. from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education – University of Toronto.





As part of their presentation, Costa and van Grootheast showed a number of trailers, including two of the most popular ones they have used in their course, The Story of Stuff *www.thestoryofstuff.com and* The Meatrix *www.themeatrix.com*

Course Rationale

The presenters see documentary films as an effective medium for developing higher order thinking skills. These include the ability to distinguish between facts and opinions or personal feelings; arrive at judgments and make inferences; generate questions; recognize and construct convincing arguments; formulate and support opinions; define, analyze, and devise solutions for problems and issues; sort, organize and classify information; integrate information and discern relationships between ideas; evaluate information; arrive at supportable and informed conclusions; apply understanding and knowledge to new and different situations; develop logical and reasonable interpretations; suspend beliefs and remain open to new information.

Their pedagogical approach also draws from the notions of social constructivism, a basic tenet of which is that learners construct knowledge largely on their own, by associating new with prior information.

The learner's interactions with the social and physical environment are important, since the learner must always be at the centre of the learning process, moving back and forth between independent and collaborative learning engagements, while the instructor takes on the supportive functions of facilitator and guide.

(Continued on page 16)

(Continued from page 15)

The rationale further reflects the influence of John Dewey, stressing the role of inquiry as a motivating force within the learner. In inquiry-based learning, students formulate problem statements by generating their own questions. In searching for answers to their questions they gather and sort information from an array of sources. They also engage in analysis of their findings, with ongoing feedback, and finally try to arrive at conclusions by evaluating the evidence.

Why use documentaries with L2 learners?

The following summarizes some of the features and benefits of using documentaries to enhance students' critical thinking and inquiry skills. Documentaries, the presenters contend:

1. present examples of authentic language use in 'real' contexts – primarily in spoken language, but also supported by visual 'text'
2. provide meaningful content for learners' understanding of the world
3. raise important personal, social and ethical questions by engaging learners with provocative topics
4. challenge preconceived notions about social, political, economic and personal issues
5. empower students with 'cultural capital', enabling them to participate in the world on an equally-informed basis with native speakers
6. provide language and ideas to challenge accepted universal truths
7. enable students to examine all sides of an issue and make informed judgments
8. promote independent learning and thinking
9. encourage students to actively think and question
10. prompt students to engage personally with relevant issues in their lives beyond the classroom
11. provoke students to examine their own assumptions and consider alternate perspectives
12. give students the opportunity to gather and sort through relevant information, reason logically from the information, and draw conclusions
13. help to create a community of learners with level-appropriate, teacher-supported learning

Using Documentaries – Pre-viewing, Viewing, Post-viewing

In organizing classroom activity for their students, the presenters provide handout forms to assist in organizing their documentary viewing experiences. A selection of these follows:

Pre-viewing activities

Activities before viewing a documentary can help to create a context for the viewing experience. Classroom activities such as the following help to generate language and interaction among learners.

(Continued on page 17)

What is critical thinking?

There are many notions about critical thinking. One widely-accepted definition states that critical thinking is the ability to judge the plausibility of specific assertions, to weigh evidence, to assess the logical soundness of inferences, and to construct counter-arguments and alternative hypotheses.

Activist, lawyer and member of Amnesty International, Susan Benesch describes critical thinking this way:

> Critical thinking begins when people make the connections between their individual lives and social conditions. It ends one step beyond perception – towards the actions people take to regain control over social structures detrimental to their lives.

Perhaps no one has defined critical thinking more elegantly than the famed scholar of the Elizabethan period, Francis Bacon:

> For myself, I found that I was fitted for nothing so well as for the study of Truth; as having a mind nimble and versatile enough to catch the resemblances of things ... and at the same time steady enough to fix and distinguish their subtler differences; as being gifted by nature with desire to seek, patience to doubt, fondness to meditate, slowness to assert, readiness to consider, carefulness to dispose and set in order; and as being a man that neither affects what is new nor admires what is old, and that hates every kind of imposture.

(Continued from page 16)

- **Create a collage** – group activity: create a collage incorporating opinions, views, knowledge on the theme or topic of the documentary. Follow-up: have groups display collages, walk around and comment or ask questions related to other group collages
- **Surveys** – in-class or survey other classes on opinions about the topic
- **KWL Sheet** – What I Know/What I Want to Discover/What I have Learned
- **Webquests/Internet Treasure Hunts** – to get background information on the documentary topic. Instructor provides websites.
- **Impromptu news show** - Brainstorm and present a mock news show, presenting facts from research
- **One-page 'freewrite'** – Students write for X minutes on the topic or theme
- **Pass the Sheet** – groups write down everything they know about the topic for 1 minute and pose any questions they have, then pass on the sheet to the next group (5 sheets rotate around the room)
- **Documentary synopsis** – students read a synopsis and then tell a partner in another group.
- **View a documentary trailer** – use this with Documentary Viewing sheet below.

(Continued on page 21)

DOCUMENTARY VIEWING FORM

Name:

Topic:

Video Title: **Date:**

PRE-VIEWING	DURING VIEWING	POST VIEWING
Some things I already know about the topic of the documentary:	Note the main arguments, important details (facts and statistics) and any powerful images that you see:	In point form, write your reactions to the viewpoints, supporting arguments and images:
Questions I have about the topic:		
My viewpoint on the topic:		What are three questions that you have: 1. 2. 3.

NINE QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER
when watching a documentary

What is the dominant viewpoint of the documentary? Give specific examples of information offered to help viewers understand or agree with the viewpoint.

Do you agree with the director's viewpoint? Why? Why not?

List two facts that were stated. List two opinions that were stated. How did you distinguish between the facts and the opinions?

FACTS: OPINIONS:

Were the arguments in the documentary presented logically and accurately? Why or why not?

How do the issues raised in the document affect you personally?

Have any of your ideas changed or been modified after viewing the documentary?

What are the local and global implications of the documentary's topic?

If you had the opportunity to speak to the director's, what would you like to ask?

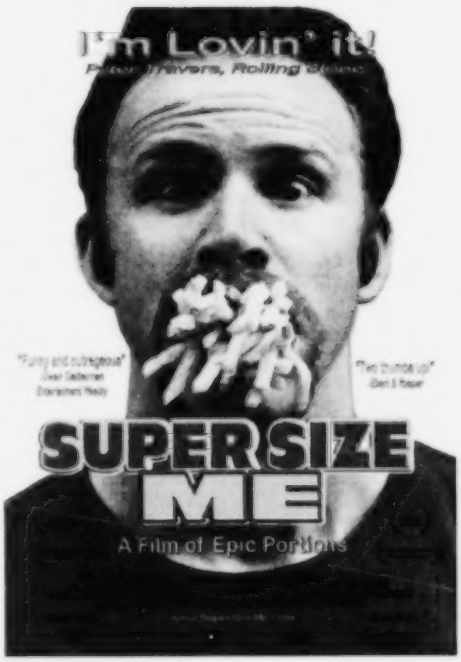
What new questions or reactions do you have about the content of the documentary?

Theme

Fast Food Culture and the Corporations that Feed It

Documentary choice

Super Size Me



Related Resources

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Super_Size_Me entry with link to the official movie website.
- http://www.cbc.ca/consumers/market/files/food/junkfood addiction/index.html CBC's Marketplace takes a look at our addiction to junk food and links to other relevant articles and websites.
- http://www.cbc.ca/consumers/market/files/food/fastfood/index.html. What is the long-term impact of junk food?
- http://www.cbc.ca/health/story/2004/12/30/fast-food041230html. Fast food supersizes consumers
- http://www.mcdonalds.ca/en/index.aspx. Macdonald's Canada official website
- http://publicsphere.typepad.com/behindthespin/2006/02/mcdonalds healt.html. Behind the Spin: McDonald's and healthy eating.
- http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/magazine/4304118.stm. BBC article titled "Is junk food a myth?"

Web Quest

- http://education.iupui.edu/webquests/fastfood/index.htm. Fast food and Nutrition:

Workshop participants received a 22-page handout of activities and related teaching and learning resources. This is the information for just one of the themes used in the George Brown course.

(Continued from page 17)

- **Information Article** – teacher-provided. Students read an article and share information as part of a jigsaw activity.
- **Director's biography** – students search imdb.com (Internet Movie Database) for information related to the film, e.g. book reviews for docs. based on themes also dealt with in books
- **Official Movie websites** – Students go to official sites for information on the film, director, issues raised in the documentary

Using Documentary Trailers

Trailers (the short promotional commercials for the full program) are also a good way to introduce a documentary. They not only introduce the topic to the viewers but acquaint them with the director's style and tone as well. They vary in length from 30 seconds to two minutes.

A Google search for film trailers will yield many websites. Simply type 'Documentary trailers' into your web browser.

As part of their presentation, Costa and van Grootheest showed a number of trailers, including two of the most popular ones they have used in their course: *The Story of Stuff* and *The Meatrix*.

Both documentaries are highly entertaining, opinionated and at the same time informative attacks on the threats they see in rampant consumerism in the modern global economic system.

For both documentary videos cited, the complete video is available for free downloading from the internet. The websites for both documentaries also offer complete scripts and overdubbed narration and/or subtitles in many languages in addition to English. Links within the websites also direct viewers to related resources and local action groups involved in the issues that are the focus of the documentary.

Formative and Culminating Assessments

Assessment of the learning outcomes from using documentaries may be either formative and ongoing or summative in the form of tests. One of the most useful methods of formative assessment has proved to be the creation of mini-documentaries on themes suggested by the students themselves, modeled on the ones they have seen in class.

Guidelines for Using Documentaries

Many documentaries deal with mature issues or controversial topics that may not be suitable for all classes. The presenters advise that just as you screen videos or read books with a view to potential content problems prior to using them in class, you should prescreen all video materials.

Also, prior to screening a documentary in your classroom, it is important to be aware of copyright restrictions.

Canadian copyright law requires that videos, films and DVDs shown in the classroom must have non-theatrical Public Performance Rights. Unlike American law, Canadian copyright law does not include 'educational rights'.

Videos or DVDs borrowed from video stores or public libraries or purchased from a

(Continued on page 22)

A Selective List of Documentaries Suitable For ESL	
Theme	**Documentaries**
Media and body image	*Killing Us Softly*
Immigrant Disillusionment	*Broken Promises* (CTV – W5)
Health Care Systems in Canada and the U.S.	*Sicko*
Vegetarianism	*The Meatrix* (available online: themeatrix.com)
Global Warming	*An Inconvenient Truth*
Gun Violence in America	*Bowling for Columbine*
Caught in a System of Consumption	*The Story of Stuff*
Impact of the fast food industry	*Fast Food Nation* and *Super Size Me*
Environment and Industrialization in China	Manufactured Landscapes
The Culture of Credit Card Debt	*Maxed Out* and *In Debt we Trust: America before the bubble bursts*
Fair Trade Coffee	*Black Gold:Wake up and Smell the Coffee* and *Black Coffee*

(Continued from page 21)

store are for home use only, and may not be shown in a classroom. It is up to individual instructors to explore the types of licensing agreements that have been negotiated between his/her educational institution and the movie/documentary producers and/or distributors.

Sources of Documentaries

The National Film Board is an excellent source of documentaries of different lengths. Students may watch them for $2 at the NFB Mediatheque viewing stations. Go to: http://www.nfb.ca/collection/films/

Some of the themes of NFB docs are: health, education, the environment, cultural diversity, mental health issues and the family, child and youth behaviour disorders, the immigrant experience, social issues, children and youth.

Documentaries and Supplementary Resources

Workshop participants received a 22-page handout of activities and related teaching and learning resources. This conference workshop presented a detailed and compelling case for using documentaries in the ESL classroom. ■

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

The Newspaper in Education

Presenter: Andrew Nicholson, Newspaper in Education Coordinator, Sun Media

A workshop on techniques and benefits of using newspapers in the ESL classroom revealed that some teachers already use them as inexpensive and motivational tools, but even they picked up a few new tricks.

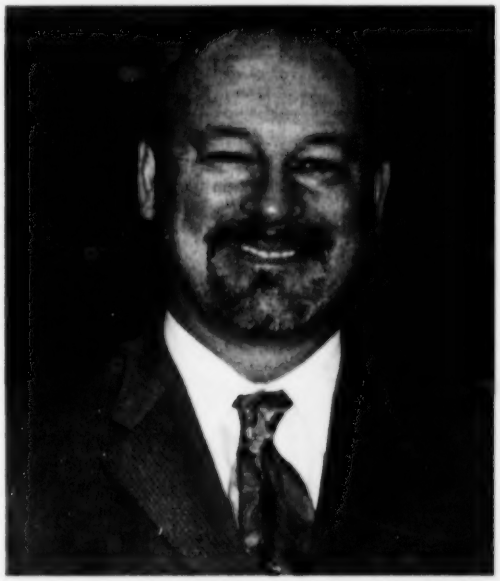
Andrew Nicholson, the presenter at this workshop, is a self-described 'recovering teacher' who previously taught high school English and Physical Education. He is presently coordinator of the Newspaper in Education group at the *Toronto Sun*, and chair of the Newspaper in Education group in Canada.

In this one-hour workshop the 40 teachers not only shared their own experiences using the newspaper, but came away with some new ideas for integrating the daily newspaper into their daily classroom activities.

Nicholson began by identifying some things that newspapers and schools have in common: they are both in the business of educating people of all ages, broadening their horizons and helping them to make sense of the world. And both teachers and newspapers are striving to develop informed and involved citizens who can shape the course of their own lives.

A quick survey of the workshop group revealed that a majority had used the newspa-

(Continued on page 24)



Andrew Nicholson, Sun Media

(Continued from page 23)

per in their ESL classrooms, but not all do it on a regular basis.

Benefits of using the newspaper

The group identified some of the benefits of using the newspaper. One person described the newspaper as motivational for all ages and interests. It offers, she said, "a page for every age."

Another pointed out that the newspaper is an affordable teaching/learning resource. When compared to the cost of most conventional textbooks, the newspaper is not only a low-cost alternative, but one that is regularly updated, so the content is always fresh.

In addition, many newspapers can come to the school at a special rate, through the Newspaper in Education program, for two weeks or a month or for the whole school year. Teachers can then develop a sequence of lessons using the same resource.

A third teacher explained how the newspaper is relevant to her ESL students' lives, constantly bringing real-world meaning to the classroom. Moreover, students become more familiar with the language and conventions of newspapers because of repeated use.

The newspaper also helps learners to improve their reading and writing skills. In fact, studies have also shown significant improvements in reading vocabulary, reading comprehension and writing outcomes amongst all students who read the newspaper.

There are also other beneficial features of the newspaper as a teaching and learning resource in the ESL classroom:

- Easily accessible reading material already organized by theme in different sections of the newspaper: human interest stories, local news, world events, investigative reports, health and science, the arts, sports, weather, mathematics, money and finance, advertisements, personal ads, buy and sell features.
- Some items are especially good for lower literacy level classes where learners need material with minimal text, such as cartoons.
- Content is ideal for developing

(Continued on page 25)

(Continued from page 24)

reading skills across a wide range of text genres – first person human interest stories, editorials, letters to the editor, pyramid-style 'W5' reports, photo captions, advertisements, headlines, advice columns, recipes, guides to shopping, humour, graphs and charts, statistics, etc. These become 'models' for student writing and can lead to the production of a classroom newspaper.

- an excellent way to develop reading comprehension and speaking skills – locating information and highlighting it, skimming and scanning for facts and main ideas, expressing opinions about social, family and political issues, using the dictionary, drawing conclusions and making inferences, jigsaw or information gap activities, true and false exercises, understanding headlines and predicting story content then checking after reading.
- Manageable length of articles for classroom use.
- Up-to-date content for school subject areas such as geography, math, health, citizenship, environmental studies
- The opportunity for students to experience the same stories in different media – television, the internet, the newspaper, magazines, radio.

All in all, this workshop was one of those practical, hands-on experiences that give teachers ideas they can use immediately. It was well worth the time and effort. ■

Reading comprehension levels of Toronto newspapers

Sun – Grade 7
Toronto Star – Grade 10
National Post – Grade 10
Globe and Mail – Grade 12

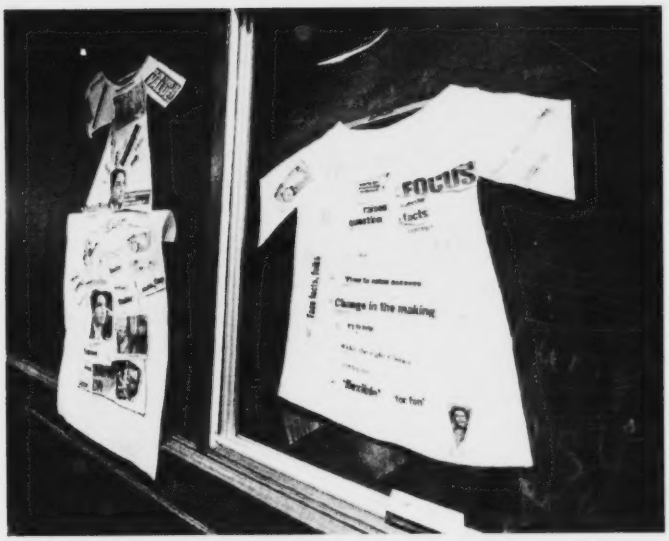
Related Resources

NIE – Newspaper in Education

Newspaper in Education is a program designed to utilize the hard copy newspaper or the electronic edition version as if they were actual textbooks. Teacher resource kits from NIE provide ready-made activities and lesson plans that utilize the newspaper and/or e-editions as 'a living textbook' in the classroom. The resource kits are suitable for all grades and adult literacy and ESL classes.

Contact information:

SUN MEDIA
Newspaper in Education
Torsun.nie@sunmedia.ca
http://nie.sunmedia.ca
Tel. 416.947.7294
Fax: 416. 947.2355



Newspaper Activity, Levels 1 and 2

Design a T-shirt using newspaper phrases, words, sentences, graphics

Directions:

- Arrange groups of 3-5 learners.
- Each group cuts out a life-sized T-shirt shape from chart paper.
- Take one copy of *the Sun* or another newspaper and distribute a few pages to each person in the group.

The task:

- Find and cut out words, phrases and pictures from the newspaper that will answer a question: e.g. *What makes a great teacher?*
- Arrange the cut-out text and pictures on the t-shirt shape and stick them down.
- Practice reading the t-shirt text aloud in the group, taking turns on the words and phrases. Variation: practice group choral reading of the text.
- Display the t-shirt for the other groups in the class and have one member from each group read and explain the text on their T-shirt. Repeat for the other groups.
- Talk about: which phrases or words were chosen by many groups? What is special about the language? Explain how the words 'work' for the central message.

Variations: What makes a great student?
What makes a great city?
What makes a great day?
What makes a great world?

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Plenary Session Summary: Recognizing and Alleviating the Impact of Compassion Fatigue

Speaker: Jane Gilbert

Jane Gilbert outlined the process and experience of compassion fatigue and offered practical tools and strategies for recognizing and alleviating its impact.

Compassion fatigue, what is it?

It is the set of natural, predictable, treatable and preventable consequences of caregiving. Since teaching by its very nature involves caregiving, it lends itself to the consequences of compassion fatigue. As Gilbert pointed out, teachers – like other caregivers- often hold themselves to account for the stressful situations encountered by their students. Teachers are, moreover, very good at subjugating their own needs to the needs of others and internalizing the resulting stress themselves. And that is where problems can arise.

Making your own well-being a priority

Signals of stress in your life may reveal themselves as raised heart rate and higher blood pressure, a compromised immune system, suppressed digestive and reproductive systems, intestinal disorders, suppressed sex drive and appetite, mood swings and weepiness, impaired memory, roller coaster thought patterns, anxiety, an overall

(Continued on page 28)

Jane Gilbert is a certified compassion fatigue specialist. After graduating from Brock University, she spent much of her career in helping to heal people dealing with trauma and crises. She has worked with high-risk youth, abused women and their children, developmentally disabled adults, newcomers to Canada, homeless persons, people living with HIV/AIDS and those with serious mental illness in diverse settings - residences, classrooms and shelters.

Declaration of Self Care

I intend to:

- Be honest with myself at all times.
- Practice healthy detachment with colleagues and clients. Learn how to say "No".
- Engage in regular spiritual practices.
- Accept myself for who I am.
- Respect the skills that I have, including both my professional skills and my people skills, and point them out to friends.
- Surround myself with people who support me, avoiding 'optional people' in my life.
- Process my emotions on a regular basis.
- Respect that my emotional limits may vary from day to day.
- Modify the use of substances that alter my mood – sugar, alcohol, others.
- Think positive and affirming thoughts about myself.
- Cry
- Laugh

(Continued from page 27)

sense of depression, or feeling out of control in your job and in life generally.

Gilbert called on all teachers to make a declaration of self care as a top priority for their own mental, physical and spiritual well-being.

Stress management techniques

These include both physical and mental techniques. On the physical side, simple relaxation exercises like taking long, deep breaths trick the body into thinking that it is not stressed and in so doing teach the brain to tell the body to slow down. Practising Tai Chi and yoga, and the simple exercise of walking are also beneficial, as is massage.

Stress management techniques work because they lower your heart rate and blood pressure, improve your mood, reduce your anger response in difficult situations and stabilize your health overall.

On the mental and spiritual side, meditation also helps to relieve stress by slowing down the body. Engaging in reflec-

(Continued on page 29)

Range of Emotions	Life Looks Like This	Prevention/Management
Resilient Joyful Happy Enthusiastic Content	Engaged in your community. Active. Confident. Work is satisfying. Strong support system. Healthy boundaries. Happy, loving home. Undisturbed sleep. Rare use of comfort substances.	Ask for help promptly. Embrace life's challenges. Self-aware, Values and integrity. Maximise physical health. Regular exercise. Well practiced Stress Management skills. High self-esteem. Spiritually engaged. Strong sense of inner guidance.
At Risk Bored Frustrated Disappointed Overwhelmed	Too busy. Boundaries blurred. Heightened Stress Response. Minor illnesses Work is unsatisfying. Feeling socially and emotionally isolated. Addictive/compulsive behaviours. Gallows humour, retail therapy, debt. Personal relationships suffering. Spiritual life neglected. Poor eating habits. Disrupted sleep. Increased use of comfort substances.	Seek professional assistance with experienced Compassion Fatigue Specialist without delay. Practice Stress Management Techniques. Decrease/eliminate caffeine/sugar intake. Pursue relaxing exercise. Re-evaluate career path. Reconnect with spiritual practice. Monitor use of comfort substances.
In Danger Pessimistic Angry Depressed Powerless	Irritable, shut down. Rapid thought processes. Frequently triggered Stress Response. Work means nothing/everything. Quick fix eating. Unhealthy boundaries. Compromised immune system. Significant health concerns. Relationships disintegrating. Deep debt. No spiritual practice. No emotional reserves, exhausted. Adrenaline junky. No safe haven. Victim perspective. Serious substance abuse. Suicidal thoughts.	Acknowledge the situation and seek professional help IMMEDIATELY (Counselling, Doctor, Rehab). You need help to connect your feelings to Compassion Fatigue. Low self-esteem. Loss of integrity, values No inner sense of guidance. Be gentle with yourself. NEVER UNDERESTIMATE YOUR ABILITY TO HEAL.

Compassion fatigue map

tive writing can also be helpful in that it leads to understanding the elements of stress, as do counseling and faith practices. All of these bring the sufferer to a place of groundedness from which lasting healing can come.

How teachers can help themselves

For teachers experiencing stress, Bradley advocates making yourself a priority without delay. This is the time to care for yourself before you care for others. Notice your triggers and the 'quick fix' behaviours you choose for dealing with stress. Reduce your caffeine and sugar intake for now.

Say "No way!" more often than you would normally do. Recruit two new people into your own social support system. And finally, create a long-term resiliency plan for your life. ■

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Plenary Session Summary: 7 Success Secrets for Immigrants to Canada

Speaker: Nick Noorani

Nick Noorani, publisher of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine, wove his personal life story as an immigrant entrepreneur to Canada into a set of seven principles for success for all newcomers.

Nick Noorani had special words of praise and encouragement for English teachers, as they play a critical role in the newcomer's process of integration into a new society. "You are the gardeners of the immigrant's dreams; you help to make them grow. And I have seen time and again the results of your gardening."

His interest in how immigrants adapt has led him on a search for the answer to the question: "What makes this immigrant successful while that one isn't?"

The defining characteristic of his seven success secrets, he contends, is that they are all internal. "There are things that you can control as a newcomer and those you can't," he says, "but what you do have control over is yourself."

Nick Noorani, publisher of Canadian Immigrant *magazine*

1. Learn the Language

The number one issue for many immigrants is language. If you don't have English skills, says Noorani, you are like a diamond hidden in a cave at the bottom of the ocean. At

(Continued on page 31)

(Continued from page 30)

the simplest level, until you speak English how can you demonstrate your background education and training?

Often asked by newcomers, "How will I know if my English is good enough?", he invariably answers: "When you can watch *The National* with Peter Mansbridge on CBC-TV and have a conversation the next day with another immigrant, preferably not from your own language group, and intelligently discuss what the man was talking about."

"My own rule of thumb," he continued, " is that you need to speak English for six hours a day. But you also need to listen to the radio – CBC for example – and talk to people wherever and whenever you meet them."

"How do you lose your accent," he is also asked. "By working at it," he replies. Noorani himself took an accent reduction course in his early days in Vancouver, and that helped. "But I was the one who took that on," he states. "The government or a social agency didn't ask me to do it. I had to make the decision myself, because it's important that you don't always expect others to do the spadework that you need to do for yourself."

2. Stay Positive

People need to inoculate themselves against 'the negativity virus', says Noorani. And one way to do that is to move out of your own cultural and ethnic group. He related the story of getting call display on his home telephone because an immigrant friend was constantly calling with the depressing story of his life. The solution, he says, is to stay out of the circle of influence of negative people. If you meet a negative person, go and find a positive person as quickly as you can.

In a sidebar to teachers he stressed that classrooms also need to be positive places, and teachers need to banish negativity from their classrooms.

3. Embrace Canada

To all newcomers Noorani sings the praises of this land. "There is nothing that stops you falling in love with Canada," he counsels. "You need to allow yourself the pleasure of enjoying your new country by going out into the wider community. If you don't, you will always be a visitor in your own country. But an even more important reason to engage with the society here is that the best part of Canada is Canadians!"

4. Have a Plan B

People who don't have a plan often lose their way; they lose their motivation to succeed and ultimately to thrive. So having a plan is critical.

"I came here with 23 years of high-profile experience in advertising," he says, "but when I arrived in Vancouver, there were no jobs in advertising agencies for me. So I took a junior position in a small company. The lesson is that you need to use whatever skills you acquired in the past to help you make a plan for the future," And to have a Plan B, you must first have a Plan A."

"It's not helpful to say, "I was a General Manager back home so I should be a General Manager here." he advises. "But in your past experience you acquired a lot of transferable skills and you need to be able to imagine in what other ways those same skills can be used in the new situation."

(Continued on page 32)

(Continued from page 31)

5. Move out of 'ethnic silos'

Referring to his own past, Noorani says, "I didn't move away from 1.2 billion Indians in India to hook up with the 10,000 Indians living in Surrey, B.C. So my wife and I deliberately did not settle down there. Besides," he continued, "there's very little chance I'm going to learn what I need to know about this country from someone who is from my own country."

When asked about prejudice, Noorani's answered, "Yes, it's true. Some Canadians are prejudiced and biased... but most aren't. In fact, at a critical moment when my old car needed a brake job, it was a Canadian who paid for it. Furthermore, I didn't come to Canada to be just tolerated," says Noorani. "I came to be accepted just as any other citizen."

He often challenges those who bemoan their social isolation by asking, "Well, how many Canadian friends do you have?" The answer is 'go out and get some', whatever way you can.

6. Take Risks

When newcomers arrive in Canada, they sometimes say, "I don't want to take any more risks."

"Quite the opposite!" says Noorani, "you must continue to take risks. For without risk-taking there is no hope that you will succeed. Every risk brings some kind or reward, some kind of knowledge, even if it is the realization that you have made a mistake in this instance. You learn from failure; that's its great quality."

7. Volunteer

As many immigrants discover, volunteering is a great way to learn about Canada. It throws you into the hurly-burly of life here. And that is its primary benefit. When you volunteer, you're saying 'I love this country and I am taking my own little piece of it." Not only that, you often find a job through volunteering.

In volunteer work, you can also meet someone who could become a mentor to you. "In my Canadian journey, " says Noorani, "I have had 12 mentors. I would not be the publisher of *Canadian Immigrant* magazine today, with a circulation of 270,000 and counting, were it not for the friendship, guidance and wise counsel of my mentors. They have made a world of difference."

In thanking the speaker, one audience member posed a question: 'But Nick, why didn't you reveal your very best kept secret to success – your sense of humour? You have truly given us some keys to success which we can pass on to our students." ■

Noorani's 7 Steps to Success

1. Learn the language
2. Stay positive
3. Embrace Canada
4. Have a Plan B
5. Move out of ethnic silos
6. Take Risks
7. Volunteer

2008 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Plenary Session Summary: Extensive Reading as an Entry Point for English-language Development

Speaker: Jim Cummins

Jim Cummins explained that research now suggests that a focus on extensive reading in adult ESL classrooms can be as effective in developing L2 proficiency as traditional approaches to language teaching.

One of the most hopeful developments in second language teaching and learning over the past decade has been the discovery that the internet can be a wonderful resource for authentic and potentially comprehensible input for adult language learners.

ESL teachers who effectively combine this awareness with a broadened understanding of the nature of English can become highly effective enablers in the learning process, especially for learners who are already literate in their first language.

Extensive Reading

Research is now suggesting that a focus on extensive reading in adult ESL classrooms can be as effective in developing L2 proficiency as traditional approaches to language teaching. Teachers who enable literate L2 learners to access texts via the internet that would otherwise be too difficult for them to

(Continued on page 34)

Jim Cummins is a Canada Research Chair in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. His research focuses on literacy development in multilingual school contexts as well as on the potential roles of technology in promoting language and literacy development.

(Continued from page 33)

read and understand on their own are beginning to see dramatic growth in learner literacy.

The practice of wide reading among L2 learners leads to remarkable gains in conversational fluency, discrete knowledge of language structures and functions, and improvements in overall academic language proficiency. As teachers support extensive reading activity in their classrooms, they are finding that it can also act as a springboard to speaking, listening and writing activities.

Proficiency in English

When it comes to conversational fluency, we often define proficiency as the ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-to-face situations. The vast majority of native speakers develop this proficiency by the age of five. Their conversations are characterized by the use of high frequency words and simple grammatical constructions. Typically, non-adult English language learners (ELLs) require one to two years to attain peer-appropriate levels of conversational fluency.

In acquiring the other language and literacy skills, school-age English language learners normally require five years to attain grade expectations. For adults, the catch-up period can be shorter, but it is strongly influenced by the level of their L1 literacy skills. In fact, for some adults, conversational fluency may be a greater challenge than academic language proficiency. Interestingly, though adult ELLs may take longer to achieve conversational fluency, phonology is the only area in which children and adolescents learn more efficiently than adults.

Discrete language skills – the rule-governed aspects of language - can be developed through direct instruction or immersion in a literacy-rich environment where meanings are elaborated through language and attention is drawn to literate forms of language. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is that English language learners can acquire these special language skills concurrently with their acquisition of basic vocabulary and conversational fluency.

Academic language is characterized by less-frequently-used words in the lexicon and requires an ability to interpret and produce increasingly complex language. It is thus generally less accessible to L2 learners. However, if a school program incorporates and encourages extensive academic reading, the possibility of catching up to the proficiency level of native speakers is greatly increased. To aid in this catching up, effective teachers also find it helpful to engage students in frequent writing across genres.

Latinate and Germanic Roots of English

Both ESL teachers and their adult L2 students benefit from knowing that academic English language comes mostly from Latin and Greek sources, while conversational language, on the other hand, derives primarily from Germanic sources.

In fact, the most frequent 150 words used in academic prose derive from Greek and Latin roots. Moreover, the most commonly used student aptitude tests are essentially tests of knowledge of words with Latin and Greek origins. Even in Grade 5 level social studies texts, words such as *amend* and *annexation*, for example, both come from Lati-

(Continued on page 35)

What's Nu? The 150 most commonly-used words in English academic prose come from Greek and Latin roots.

(Continued from page 34)

nate roots. In addition, mathematical vocabulary also relies heavily on words with a Latin or Greek origin; for example, words ending in *–tion*.

The Cognate Principle

In a sense, English is as much a Romance language as it is a Germanic tongue because of its academic language. And even when we use Germanic terms, for example, the word 'speed', we often have English language cognates derived from related Romance languages, such as in the synonym 'velocity', which in Spanish is *velocidad*.

When we use the Germanic adjective 'sick,' we also have the cognate 'infirm,' which in Spanish is *enfermo*. Similarly, we use the Anglo-Saxon term 'meet,' but also the verb 'encounter,' similar to the Spanish *encontrar*.

The implication for ESL teachers is that if learners from Romance language backgrounds know this cognate principle, they can learn how to harvest their existing linguistic knowledge systematically in a way that will help them learn English more efficiently. And one way to increase this efficiency is to study and use word families.

It is therefore helpful for teachers to embody in their instruction such general notions as the cognate principle.

Extensive and Engaged Reading in ESL Programs

In the most recent edition of his book, *The Power of Reading*, Stephen Krashen (2004) cites findings that confirm the value of extensive reading in English as a foreign language (EFL).

And in the most recent findings of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), sponsored by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the strongest predictor of literacy

(Continued on page 36)

(Continued from page 35)

performance globally derives from students' achievement in reading rather than the other language skills.

Other studies cite the benefits of what is termed 'engaged reading'. When effective instructional strategies and a learning environment hospitable to committed and regular reading are in place, learners not only increase the amount and range of their reading, but also greatly improve in their writing, their use of effective strategies for deep understanding of text, and experience positive affective outcomes. At a practical level, daily reading of a newspaper in ESL classes, for example, yields highly positive results in overall language learning.

Using Internet Resources

Internet resources can help adult learners extend their knowledge of less frequently used words in English.

Free websites such as Word Champ (www.wordchamp.com, requires registration) contain built-in dictionaries and flash cards to help learners extend and consolidate their word knowledge. Another free website, Word Smyth (www.wordsmyth.net/) generates a glossary when a student types in a word. It will also generate quizzes about English vocabulary.

Internet sites such as these put the responsibility on the learners themselves to find out about words, their meanings, alternate meanings, and so on.

Since some ELLs do not come with a tradition and habit of reading, teachers need to explain why they need to read. When they become aware how reading helps them to make sense of the world that they are hearing and talking about, teachers can then help them find suitable materials, make reading an important element of in-class experience, and direct them to outside sources of information which to assist their development in reading. The internet is one such source.

What is increasingly clear in the research and teaching practice of skilled practitioners is that systematic exploration of language through reading makes learning more effective and efficient. Through such engagements learners extend their linguistic knowledge not only of word meanings, but also of their variant forms and, perhaps most importantly for many adult learners, their use in both everyday life and academic learning. ■

2006 FALL CONFERENCE SESSION REPORT

Plenary Session Summary: Managing the Process of Change

Speaker: Peter de Jager

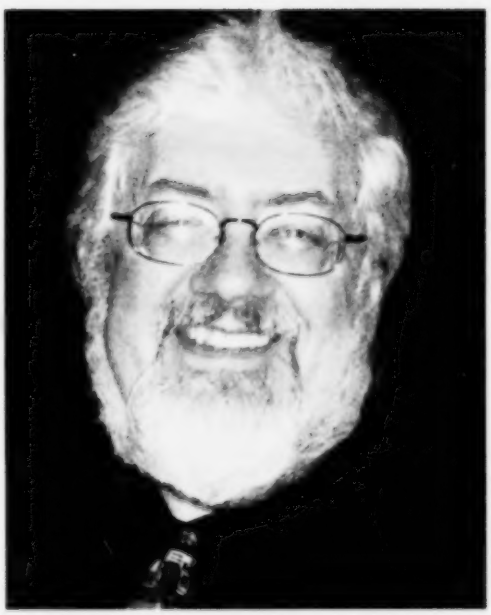
Peter de Jager put the question directly to the audience: Do people resist change?

There is a prevailing belief, even shared by some in the teaching profession, that people normally resist change. In this plenary session, author and consultant Peter de Jager put the question directly to the audience: Do people resist change? Overwhelmingly the answer was 'yes'.

De Jager responded that because so many people answer 'yes', the notion of resistance has become axiomatic. However, he contends, it is not true. It is a giant misconception in organizations throughout the world, especially prevalent amongst managers, usually the frontline agents of change.

People's reaction to change is more complex, says de Jager. In fact, people both resist and embrace change. Their response depends on a host of factors: what change is contemplated, how it will be implemented, and why it seems advisable or necessary, for example.

(Continued on page 38)



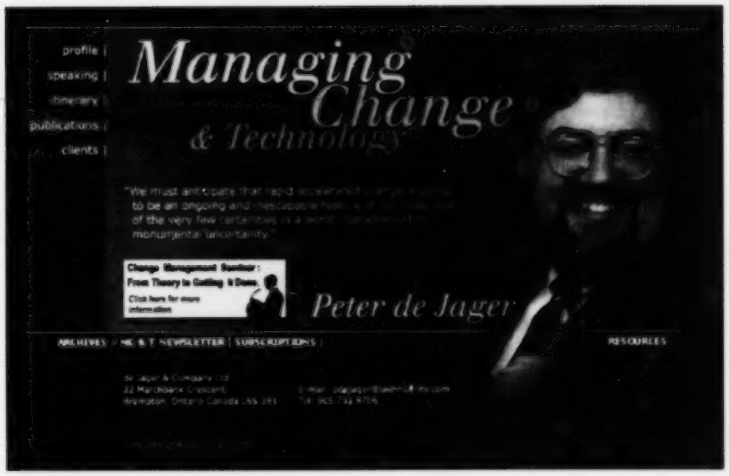
Peter de Jager is a speaker/writer/consultant on the issues relating to the Rational Assimilation of the Future. He has published hundreds of articles on topics ranging from problem solving, creativity and change to the impact of technology on areas such as privacy, security and business.

(Continued from page 37)

What people actually resist, says de Jager, is *being* changed from forces outside themselves because it makes them feel insecure and impinges on their identity.

Big organizations, says de Jager, normally don't like it when employees are skeptical about change.

By and large they don't want people to ask questions or voice concerns, and often avoid dialogue with those whose lives are most affected.



Unfortunately, the question of 'why do we need to change?' has been reframed as a negative, a sign of resistance, rather than the opening to a shared discussion which will ease the processes of change.

For their part, those who will be most affected by change in organizations often decide not to question it. After all, they say, we don't really matter in this organization, so why bother?

Honesty about change is paramount, says de Jager. If people in control don't really want any input from those whose lives are going to be affected by change - if they have already made up their minds and posed all the questions, it is patently dishonest to ask for feedback after the fact.

The process of change, as most will have experienced, can be difficult. But, says de Jager, it doesn't have to be, if it is managed carefully and with consideration for the people involved.

Understanding and Implementing Change

Unfortunately there is no silver bullet in managing change. There are, however, some guidelines and considerations which help to make the phases of the process more understandable. They also allow the target audience to gain some control over their destiny while necessary changes are implemented.

Phase 1, Understanding the Change, involves answering questions such as: "What or who is the 'foreign element', the event or person that is going to disrupt the way things were, the status quo?"

Another question that demands consideration is "what happens if we don't change?"

(Continued on page 39)

(Continued from page 38)

People need to understand the real necessity for the change.

In addition, the questions 'who is affected by the change?' and 'why now?' will, if answered properly, provide justification for the change and legitimize it. If answers are not readily available, however, the target audience gets the message that the change is simply arbitrary.

Phase 2, Establishing Rapport, is an exercise in diplomacy. People need to trust those who plan change. Managers who admit that they don't have all the answers and who involve people in the decision-making process are more successful in implementing change. Moreover, it is important to get those to whom others look for guidance to align themselves with change. It is likewise beneficial to respond to people's reluctance to leave the status quo.

Phase 3, Understanding the Status Quo. Creating something new is always an act of destruction as well as construction. How long did it take to establish the status quo? What investments or sacrifices did people make to achieve it? How many people subscribe to it, and what values does it involve? What is the mythology of the status quo?

Phase 4, Creating Desire for Change. Sometimes the key to change is simply helping people become aware of the outside forces driving it. They need to understand the problems that exist in the status quo, what alternatives there are, the personal benefits that will come from the change, what problems the change will solve and what core values it will reinforce. In addition, people need to know about new opportunities that will arise from change. And, importantly for managers, how

(Continued on page 40)

De Jager's Laws of Change

Change is when something moves from one situation to another.

People will stay where they are unless they have a reason to change.

The more people have invested in the past, the more difficult it is for them to change.

When you try to change people, they'll resist.

Change doesn't happen instantaneously.

much information should be communicated. In the case of change, constant and ongoing communication is best.

Phase 5, Helping Desire become Action. If the target audience is itself pushing for change, what is their vision of the future? What solutions can they suggest and how can they help to achieve a new status quo? Since change is never easy, what commitment will those affected invest in the process and what will they need? Will they need dates and deadlines? And very importantly, people need to know what things will *not* change.

Phase 6, Reinforcing new Behaviours. Being told that they are making good progress motivates people engaged in the change process. They need rewards, even for failures, and their questions need to be valued, even those that come from those who resist or are in denial. Punishing people for their attachment to old habits is not a compelling incentive for them to learn new ways.

Phase 7, Creating Closure, is a time for celebrating achievements as well as for saying 'goodbye' to the old ways, talking openly about the past in order to get it out of people's systems.

So, simply put, change is complex, and needs to take into account the subtle and often changing needs of human beings in organizations. It calls for sensitivity, awareness, feedback, encouragement and attention, the 'soft skills' of managing. ■

Additional Resources

Managing Change Guide

http://www.oursouthwest.com/SusBus/mggchange.html

Tips for Managing Change

http://www.businessballs.com/changemanagement.htm

Managing Change, The People Factor

http://www.work911.com/managingchange/index.htm

13 Tips for Educators Managing Change

http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/issues/educatrs/leadrshp/le5spark.htm

Students and Autonomous Learning

By Robert Courchêne
OLBI University of Ottawa

When learners take on a self-directed learning project, for example, they gain more than new skills or knowledge. They may also develop motivation, independence, discipline, and confidence.

The phrases "Learner autonomy", "self-access learning", "self-directed learning" and "autonomous learning" are often used interchangeably in the field of L2 learning. According to Lowry (1989), self-directed learning occurs when learners control both the learning objectives and the means of learning. That is, learners engage in self-directed learning by making their own decisions about what and how they are going to learn (Lowry, 1989).

When learners take on a self-directed learning project, for example, they gain more than new skills or knowledge. They may also develop motivation, independence, discipline, and confidence.

Conceptions of Autonomous Learning

For Abdullah (2001) the central tenets of self-directed learning include the following:

- Learners are responsible for their own learning process.
- Learners self-manage and self-monitor.
- Learners collaborate with teachers and peers.
- Learners develop specific knowledge and the ability to transfer that knowledge to new situations.

Motivation and volition are crucial in initiating and maintaining the learner's efforts. (Abdullah, 2001).

For Cottrell (1995, 2000), before engaging in a self-directed learning project, learners should be able to answer for themselves the following important questions:

1. What are my short-term and long-term goals in this venture?

(Continued on page 42)

(Continued from page 41)

2. How much money, time and effort am I prepared to put into the venture?
3. What knowledge do I already have that I can use?
4. What locally available resources (people, libraries, cultural events, courses, etc.) will provide support and encouragement?
5. Where can I get friendly, reliable advice from a knowledgeable professional (e.g., an experienced language teacher) to guide me?
6. Which version of the target language (where several versions are in use) do I need to work on?

Holec (1981), one of the pioneers in this field, described autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." He elaborated on the definition as follows:

- Determining the objectives.
- Defining the contents and progressions.
- Selecting methods and techniques to be used.
- Monitoring the procedure of acquisition.
- Evaluating what has been acquired.

Little's (1998) definition is complementary to Holec's: essentially, autonomy is a capability - for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that learners will develop a particular psychological relation to the process and content of their learning. In this definition, the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning is described more in terms of control over the cognitive processes involved in effective self-management of learning.

Autonomy as Process

Autonomy also includes another vital element: that the content of learning should be freely determined by the learners. It is helpful, in this regard, to make distinctions among three aspects: autonomy as an attribute of the learner, autonomous learning as a mode of learning, and the educational practices designed to foster autonomy (Benson 2001). Benson also emphasizes that autonomy is a process — learners are not born autonomous; they gradually acquire the three aspects mentioned above. In some cases, however, learners may make very little progress in one or even all three aspects.

Wenden (1986, 1991, 1998) approached learners' beliefs from the metacognitive point of view and identified the relationship between their beliefs and their choices of learning strategies. Victori and Lockhart (1995) concluded that learners' beliefs (which they refer to as metacognition) interact with autonomy and language learning. Learners' views, for example, may affect how they respond to self-access learning opportunities. They bring their own beliefs, goals, attitudes and decisions to learning, and these influence how they approach their learning. The learning experiences, in turn, either reinforce or alter these beliefs, goals, attitudes and decisions.

Assessment and Learner Beliefs

One of the most difficult aspects of autonomy for students to acquire is self-assessment: the ability to make judgments about the progress they have made along a

(Continued on page 43)

(Continued from page 42)

proficiency continuum or in relation to a specific task. Feedback that tells a student they have got 80% of the answers correct, while informative in terms of overall performance, does not identify the problem areas for the student. To be able to effectively evaluate their own progress, students need to be taught self-assessment strategies, and need to be provided with tasks that will enable them to acquire these skills. Teachers, as will be noted below, play an important role in this process.

Finally, Nunan (1997, 2000) highlighted the condition that learners should never be forced to engage in learning experiences to which they object. Investigating learners' beliefs will help the teacher understand learner preferences and discover how to foster autonomy by raising their own awareness, changing their own attitudes and transforming learning strategies and even their beliefs about learning. As for the learners, it will lead to improved self-knowledge, more effective language learning, and thus more autonomy in language learning.

Table 1 presents a model for understanding some of the elements in the process of learner autonomy.

Joan Norlund, from Helsinki University Language Centre, based on her research, has identified principles of autonomous learning not found in other descriptions.

1. Autonomy is a capacity that has to be learned.
2. The road to autonomy is a process.
3. The state of autonomy is essentially unstable.
4. Autonomy inevitably involves a change in power relationships.

(Continued on page 44)

Level	Learner Action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles / strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning program.	Learners modify / adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond.	Learners become teachers and researchers.

Table 1

(Continued from page 43)

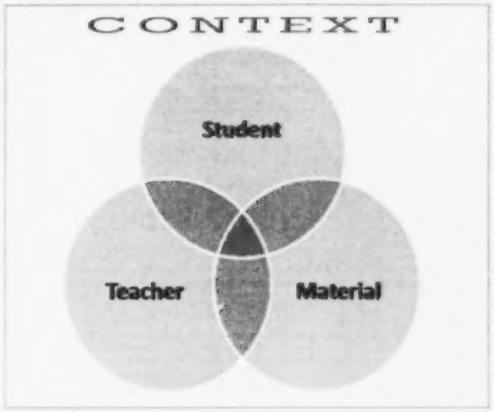
5. Autonomy requires supportive structures, both internal and external
6. Teachers can only provide circumstances, frameworks and structures that will encourage students to take control of their learning.
7. Autonomy requires a conscious awareness of the learning process.
8. Autonomy is often taken, [mistakenly], to be a solitary condition.
9. Autonomy has both individual and social aspects.
10. Autonomy is not limited to the classroom.
11. Autonomy has to be adapted to different cultural contexts.
12. Autonomy is closely related to social identity.

Holec (1981) and Little (1998), explain what autonomous learning is not:

1. Autonomy is **not** self-instruction or learning without a teacher.
2. It does **not** mean that intervention or initiative on the part of the teacher is banned.
3. It is **not** something that teachers **do** to learners.
4. It is **not** one, easily identifiable type of behaviour.
5. It is **not** a steady state reached by learners for all time.

Factors influencing the acquisition of learner autonomy

As Norlund found, autonomy is not a solitary condition. In the promotion of learning autonomy, one must take into consideration the four components as presented in the diagram below.



While a detailed commentary on all of the factors related to each of the four components is beyond the scope of this paper, it is useful to identify some of the features of the four elements of the model.

Features related to the Teacher

- Models of learning that the teacher had as a student
- Beliefs about learning
- Attitudes regarding learning and class, gender, ethnic groups
- Teacher training program
- Personal language learning experience
- In-service training
- Contact with other professionals

Features related to the Student

- L2 level

(Continued from page 44)

- Beliefs about learning: the role of S's and T's
- Language experience
- Teacher's role as part of their L2 acquisition process
- Level of autonomy
- Needs and goals
- Role in designing curriculum

Features related to Materials

- Types of materials used in language classes
- Role of student in curriculum process
- Types of materials available for autonomous learning
- Theory of L2 learning underlying materials

Features of the Context

- Support materials available
- Personnel in resource centre
- Availability of technology
- Training for learner autonomy
- Formal language classes
- Instruments for self-evaluation

Teacher and Student Roles

Teachers play a critical role in promoting students' autonomy. If they see their role as controlling the entire learning process, using a methodology that creates dependence as opposed to independence, students will never learn how to be active participants in their learning process. Also important to this process are the teacher's beliefs concerning students' abilities to actively participate in their learning and, in the long run, to become at least somewhat autonomous. If they are convinced that students are not up to this challenge, they (the students) will certainly not achieve this goal.

For students, a number of factors come into play, as autonomy is a process rather than a once-and-for-all-time, acquired state. At the beginning of their language learning, most if not all students are not able to be autonomous, as they do not have the language ability, the awareness of their needs or the metacognitive strategies to analyze their language learning. Students need to be given opportunities, then, both inside and outside the classroom to interact with materials that will "force" them to take an active role in their learning and that will provide them with the type of feedback that leads them to reflect on the task they have just completed and to evaluate why, or why they have not achieved their goals.

As Cottrell (!995) has pointed out, metacognitive strategies are the most difficult to acquire and are the ones that are most infrequently taught. Without them, however, learners are not only unable to evaluate their own progress but to identify their ongoing language needs and the materials needed to progress towards autonomy. Students must be given the tools and taught the strategies to convince them that they are capable of becoming autonomous (taking into consideration that many will only attain a limited degree of it).

One of the important findings from research in this area by Barfield and Nix (2003), along with other researchers, is that lower level students tend to use self-access learning centres more that advanced students because the latter are convinced that they have nothing to

(Continued on page 46)

(Continued from page 45)

learn from these centres. In general, students will only go to such centres if materials are easily accessed and support (in the form of teachers, and other assistance) is available.

Moreover, the materials used in the classroom and those provided in student access centres must encourage students to become risk-takers, to become responsible for their own learning. The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies has prepared a document titled *A checklist:: 20 questions to guide selection of self-access materials:*

1. What is the learning focus of a resource? What are the expected learning outcomes — the development of specific language competencies or language learning strategies? Are the learning objectives clearly stated for the learner?
2. Is the language level of the intended user clear?
3. Does the book/software package have an index or menu that guides learners towards the grammatical, lexical or other content of a module or is it relatively uninformative?
4. Is there clear learning progression between modules in a course book or software package?
5. Is the material appropriate in terms of:
   i. Topic?
   ii. The language level and prior knowledge of the intended learners?
   iii. The age and interests of the learners?
   iv. The design of the language curriculum?
6. Is the material specifically designed for self-access use? Is it self-contained or will the learner need teacher input or support? Are the instructions clear? Are there activities designed for the classroom, such as group or whole class work. Are these feasible?
7. Can the materials be improved by the development of supplementary materials?
8. Are the learning activities varied and appropriate?
9. Does the material encourage reflection on progress in terms of language competence and learning strategies? How will the learner receive feedback on their activity?
10. Is an answer key provided? Is it easy to find? How informative is it? Can one be added if necessary?
11. If the exercises are open-ended are there suggested answers? Again, can these be added by the teacher?
12. Is there a glossary or reference section?
13. Is there a tape script to accompany any video or audio recording?
14. Can the learner meaningfully 'dip' into the material or must it be used in chronological order? Is this a problem?
15. Is the material flexible? Can it be used in different ways by different groups of learners?
16. Do student numbers and known

(Continued on page 47)

(Continued from page 46)

demand justify the expense?

17. Is the resource well-designed and appealing? Today's students are visually sophisticated. Therefore, to this list needs to be added a number of practical questions:
18. Is the appropriate technical infrastructure in place to support the use of the resource? Are there sufficient video players? Is there a remote control to access the foreign language teletext? Are sound and video cards installed in the computer? Do the multimedia computers have headphones and microphones?
19. What are the copyright implications in the open-access and multi-site environment? Can a video or audiotape be copied? Is a site licence needed for software? See separate CIEL handbook on copyright.
20. If any learners have special physical or learning needs, are these catered for (see handbook 6 on accessibility issues for guidelines).

The last component, context, is often neglected when examining learner autonomy. As was pointed out above, autonomy is relative to context. In general, people are more autonomous in some areas of their life and less autonomous in others (in my own case, language teaching as opposed to woodworking). Students who may be able to be independent in terms of translation may not be in terms of listening when it comes to resources to improve these two areas. Learner support (human and material) and training for independent learning are both key to determining student progress towards autonomy (student level of autonomy held constant). For example, the challenge facing a teacher in a rural area with only a chalkboard, a few books and her own knowledge as resources is certainly greater than one teaching in a modern teaching institution.

Robert Courchêne is an adjunct professor attached to the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute at the University of Ottawa. His research and teaching interests include culture, multiculturalism and evaluation.

Conclusion

What is important in this brief review of factors that instructors need to consider when setting out to help students become autonomous learners is that no one component can succeed in helping the students reach their

(Continued on page 48)

(Continued from page 47)

goal. As with multiculturalism, all the stakeholders and conditions must be working together to achieve a common end. Student progress will certainly vary but with attention to the factors outlined in this paper at least the resources will be available for students to acquire a greater sense of autonomy in their own learning. ■

References

Abdullah, M. H. (2001). Self-directed learning. *ERIC Digest*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication.

Barfield, A. and Nix, M. (2003). *Everything you wanted to know about autonomy but you were too busy teaching to ask!* Tokyo: The Learner Development Special Interest Group of the Japan Association for Language Teaching

Brown, H.D. *(1994). Principles of Language Learning and Teaching.* Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.

Cotterall, S. (1995). Readiness Autonomy: Investigating Learner Beliefs. *System, 23(2): 190-205.*

Cottrell, S. *(2000).* Promoting learner autonomy through the curriculum: principles for designing language courses. *ELT Journal*, 54(2), 109-117.

Dam, L. (1995). *Learner Autonomy 3: From theory to classroom practice*. Dublin: Authentik.

Gardener, D. and Miller, L. (2002). *Establishing Self-access: From Theory to Practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ho, Judy and Crookall, David (1995). Breaking with Chinese Cultural Traditions: Learner Autonomy and English Language Teaching. *System*, Vol. 23, No, 2, pp. 235-243.

Holec, H. (1981/83). *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.

Horwitz, E.K., (1988). *The Beliefs about Language Learning of Beginning University Foreign Language Students*. Modern Language Journal, 72: 283-294.

Little, D. and Dam, L. (1998). *Learner Autonomy: What and Why?* JALT 98 Special Guest Speakers.

Littlewood, W. Autonomy: Autonomy and a Framework. *System*, 24:(4) 427-435, 1996.

Lowry, C. M. (1989). Supporting and facilitating self-directed learning. *ERIC Digest*. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education.

Morrison, B. (2007) The role of the self-access centre in the tertiary language learning process. *System (*accepted for publication in 2007).

Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192-203). London: Longman.

Nunan, D. (2000). *Autonomy in Language Learning.* Plenary Presentation, ASOCOPI.

The Subject Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies (2008). *Resources for independent language learning design and use - Good Practice Guide Subject* Centre for LLAS.mht (retrieved March 15, 2008)

Tong Xiaoqiong (2002). *A Study on the Relationship between Learners' Beliefs and Strategies in the Self-regulated Learning.* Thesis for Master's Degree.

Victori, M. and Lockhart, W. (1995). Pedagogical Implications. *System*, Vol. 23, No. 2. pp. 207-221.

Wenden, A. L. (1986). Help Language Learners Think about Learning. *ELT Journal*, 40/1:3-12.

Wenden, A .L. (1991). Learner's strategies for learner autonomy: Planning and implementing learner training for language learners. New York: Prentice Hall.

Wenden, A.L. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 19 (4), 515-537

White, Cynthia (1995). Autonomy and Strategy Use in Distance Foreign Language Learning: Research Findings. *System*, Vol. 23, No, 2, pp. 235-243.

IN THE CLASSROOM

Effective Strategies in High School ESL Reading Programs – Dialogic Reading

by Chadwick Low

ESL teachers sometimes discover effective learning strategies and techniques in the most surprising places.

You may find that one of the most challenging language strands in the secondary school ESL program is reading — a core component of the communicative approach in most L2 classrooms.

I have recently been using a reading strategy called Dialogic Reading with my high school ESL class. I came across the approach by chance, through playful interactions with my two-year-old son as we read picture books together. He displayed an obvious awareness of what the reading process was all about and that the marks on the page somehow told a wonderful story that we could share. A little research into what was happening brought me to the concept of dialogic reading.

With some surprise and delight I found that the benefits of 'dialogic reading' could be transferred to my ESL class.

The notion of Dialogic Reading was developed in the 1990s out of research in early childhood education conducted by Dr. Grover Whitehurst, then Director of the Institute for Education Sciences of the US Department of Education.

The technique involves a 'shared reading' approach in which there are pauses while reading a text for the purpose of asking questions to explore comprehension, appreciation, personal associations, word knowledge and recall. The questions may be about characters, the storyline, or anything that has caught the interest of the reader. The interaction creates, in effect, a dialogue that accompanies the act of reading.

Among the findings in Whitehurst's research was the discovery that children who engage in an interactive approach to reading achieved higher verbal test scores. (Whitehurst, 1988). The dialogic reading strategy also appears to activate critical-thinking skills and guides readers to understand the

(Continued on page 50)

What is Dialogic Reading?

Dialogic Reading is an interactive shared reading practice designed originally to enhance young children's language and literacy skills. During the shared reading the adult and the child switch roles so that the child learns to become the storyteller with the assistance of the adult, who functions as an active listener and questioner. The outcomes include an increased expressive vocabulary and verbal fluency. Dialogic reading also enhances other language skills; for example an increase in receptive vocabulary, linguistic complexity in utterances, narrative ability, knowledge of print concepts, rhyming abilities and writing.

(Continued from page 49)

text more deeply and personally as they are processing it.

In a recent book, *Raise a Smarter Child by Kindergarten*, author David Perlmutter underscores Whitehurst's notions, stating that dialogic reading "...activates the association areas in the frontal lobes, the most advanced and sophisticated part of the brain" (Perlmutter, 2006).

Four Stages of Dialogic Reading

Whitehurst summarizes the four stages of dialogic reading with the acronym, PEER:

- **P**rompt the learner to say something about the book or story.
- **E**valuate the reader's response.
- **E**xpand the response by rephrasing and adding information to it.
- **R**epeat the learner's responses to help underscore his/her understanding of the text. (Whitehurst, 1988)

Whitehurst created five prompts to encourage reader response to the text, using another acronym (CROWD) to describe the process.

Completion prompts ask the reader to complete a fill-in- the-blank type of response (cloze). In this way they provide an indicator of the reader's emerging comprehension or confusion. Recall prompts assess short- and long-term memory about specific information in the text.

Open-ended questions evoke the

(Continued on page 51)

(Continued from page 50)

reader's opinion about specific topics within the text and encourage them to predict what might happen next.

Wh- questions guide the reader into more complete understanding and to recall story events. Lastly, distancing prompts create an opportunity for readers to connect the text to their own lives.

Dialogic Reading in my ESL Classroom

The notions outlined above seemed applicable to my work with adolescent ESL learners, and it occurred to me that the technique may also be effective with literacy level adults. In my own classroom I put the notions of dialogic reading to the test as we read and studied American author John Steinbeck's famous novella, *The Pearl*. I chose to use a version which had illustrations as they aid comprehension and make it easier for ESL students to get into the story.

Before reading any text, I preview it with my ESL learners. This prepares them to scan, brainstorm and sample the main ideas in a section of text and create content schemata in their first language. The more they understand the ideas and some of the language they will later meet, the better they are able to engage their prior knowledge about the text.

I also use pre-reading questions to prompt them to translate ideas, using interlanguage. As we read, I encourage the students to interrupt when they have questions regarding the text.

In dealing with their questions, I can effectively monitor their emerging comprehension, prompt them to predict what might

(Continued on page 52)

Summary of *The Pearl*

Author and publisher info about The Pearl

Kino, a young pearl fisher in La Paz, Mexico, enjoys a simple life with his wife Juana and their son, Coyotito. When the boy is stung by a scorpion, the town doctor refuses treatment unless he receives a substantial fee.

That day while out diving Kino finds a great pearl and realizes that not only can he now pay the doctor who will save his son, but achieve some of his other life dreams, such as a big wedding, buying his own rifle and giving Coyotito an education, thus ensuring a better life. Word of the pearl spreads quickly in the community, however, and many plot to steal it, including the town's pearl dealers and even the deceitful doctor.

Juana realizes the dangers and tries to dissuade Kino from traveling to another town to sell the pearl. Anticipating only bad luck and ruination, she tries to throw it back into the sea, but Kino beats her and drags her back to their hut.

As they reach their home, Kino is set upon by a robber whom he kills. Both Kino and Juana realize that they must now escape into the mountains, but they are followed by trackers who shoot indiscriminately when Kino attacks them, killing the boy. Realizing that the pearl is cursed, Kino and Juana return to La Paz and throw the pearl back into the sea.

The novella explores universal themes of the desire for riches, human greed, and the disillusionment and tragedy that can come from such quest.

(Continued from page 51)

happen next and help them check the accuracy of their predictions after reading.

Here is a sample of some of the questions that I used with my class as we read *The Pearl*.

To begin, I read some the opening of the novel aloud using the five CROWD prompts to stimulate and activate students' interaction with the text. After the reading, I pose questions such as these:

- **Completion:** How did Kino find the magnificent pearl? He...
- **Recall:** Can you tell me who the main characters are in the story?
- **Open-ended response:** I'm going to show you a picture of the characters. Can you tell me about what's happening in the photo? Which characters might be 'good guys' and which might be evil?
- **W-questions:** Where is the setting? Who is the protagonist? What do you think about this situation? Why do you think A did B? What was A thinking about when she did B?
- **Distancing:** Relate this situation to your own cultural background or country that you come from. Can you imagine these kinds of people and these events happening in your country? Make a picture of it in your mind and talk about your picture. Or even draw a picture, then share it with a partner.

Chadwick Low (left) is an ESL Teacher at St. Marguerite d'Youville Secondary School, Dufferin-Peel Catholic District School Board.

Benefits

This dialogic approach creates an active listener, reinforces critical reading and prompts ESL students to think outside the box.

In addition, the strategy prompts interaction and allows students to create their own understanding and linguistic schemata.

The technique also helps ESL teachers to get away from a 'bottom-up', analytical approach to text processing, an approach which

(Continued on page 53)

(Continued from page 52)

taxes students' patience and impedes their engagement with the big ideas and themes of literature.

Instead, students are challenged to share their own solutions and express their own opinions. The technique gives them input in the lessons, allows for comparisons, connects with their cultures and provides a stimulus for higher learning. Perhaps even more importantly, dialogic reading helps to instill an interest in life-long reading in the second language learner. ■

References

Whitehurst, G. J., Arnold, D. S., Epstein, J. N., Angell, A. L., Smith, M., and Fischel, J. (1994). "A Picture Book Reading Intervention in Day Care and Home for Children from Low-Income Families." *Developmental Psychology, 30,* 679–689.

Whitehurst, G. J., Falco, F. L., Lonigan, C. J., Fischel, J. E., Debaryshe, B. D., Valdez-Menchaca, M. C., and Caulfield, M. (1998). "Accelerating Language Development Through Picture Book Reading." *Developmental Psychology, 24,* 552–559.

Perlmutter, David. *Raise a Smarter Child By Kindergarten.* Morgan Road Books, New York, 2006.

Steinbeck, John. *The Pearl.* Penguin books, New York, 1994.

In the next Issue:

Review of ***Heaven on Earth***, a new film by Deepa Mehta.

DVD release: March 3, 2009

This film explores the physical and internal journeys of an Indian bride-to-be, who leaves her Punjabi home in India to settle into a turbulent new reality in Brampton, Ont.

3rd Annual TESL Ontario Panel

The five panelists were Wilma Jenkins of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Catherine Finlay of the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, Patti Redmond (not pictured) from the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, Pauline McNaughton from the Ontario Ministry of Education, and public policy consultant Naomi Alboim of Queen's University .

Each participant identified current trends affecting language learning, reported on initiatives in progress and shared ideas about future directions.

In her remarks, Naomi Alboim focused on the implications for TESL Ontario of recent federal government policy changes in immigration policy and their potential effects on the provision of language training.

Among the changes she noted has been an increased focus on short-term labour market needs and a greater role being taken on by the provinces in selection of immigrant applicants.

Alboim also cited an increase in the number of temporary workers and greater ministerial discretion in the proposed list of occupations.

In addition, she drew attention to the creation of a new class of immigrant for

(Continued on page 55)

Naomi Alboim is currently a Fellow, Adjunct Professor, and Vice-Chair of the Policy Forum at the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University. She is also an active public policy consultant, advising governments and NGO's across Canada and abroad. Naomi is an Associate of the Maytree Foundation, working on a variety of immigration issues and directing its Public Policy Training Institute. She is on the Board of the Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council and is the Chair of its Intergovernmental Relations Committee. Prior to this, Naomi worked at senior levels in the federal and Ontario provincial governments for twenty-five years, including eight years as Deputy Minister in three different portfolios.

(Continued from page 54)

certain temporary foreign workers and foreign student graduates with professional, managerial and skilled work experience.

Population Realities

Demographic statistics are now revealing that the rate of Canada's population growth is slowing and that trend will continue without immigration.

Projections are pointing to the possibility that by 2025 fully 100 per cent of our net population growth will come from immigration. And by 2011, it is predicted that 100 per cent of our net labour force growth will come from immigration.

Such projections, however, must take into account that there is now fierce worldwide competition for skilled workers, and countries such as China are trying to attract emigrants back from countries to meet their own labour demands, particularly for skilled workers.

Alboim also cited the statistics relating to the number of immigrants coming to Canada as permanent residents; they are also going down, with 236,750 arriving in 2007 as compared to 262,229 in 2005.

Moreover, only 17 per cent of immigrants coming to Canada now are selected on the skilled worker points system and this figure is also declining.

In fact, the only numbers going up are for those people entering under the provincial nominee program and temporary worker classes.

While 47 per cent of immigrants are still going to Ontario, this percentage has also declined since 2001, while other provinces are gaining. The numbers for Toronto, for example, have declined steadily, from 50 per cent in 2001 to 36.8 per cent in 2007.

Context

In the past, Canadian immigration policy was guided by the notion of attracting citizens, not only responding to the demands of the labour force. Moreover, as Alboim pointed out, immigration is only one tool in a government's toolkit, and economic objectives need to be balanced by other goals.

Immigration statistics also reveal that almost 71 per cent are now coming from Asia and the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, and with higher education achievement levels than ever.

For example, 92 per cent of Skilled Worker Principal Applicants now have some post-secondary education and 89 per cent have some capacity in either of our official languages. Only 33 per cent of recent arrivals have no capacity in either official language.

Economic Success

Economically, how are recent immigrants doing? Not as well as previously, said Alboim, though some classes are doing better than others, for example Skilled Worker Principal Applicants and those with higher-level language skills.

But compared to Canadian-born workers, more immigrants are unemployed and underemployed, in low-paying jobs and part-time jobs.

There are many explanations for this situation, including the changing characteristics of recent immigrants (their first languages, cultures, education and country of origin), a discounting of their credentials and experience, increased competition from educated Canadian-born workers and other new en-

(Continued on page 56)

(Continued from page 55)

trants, discrimination, business cycle influences such as restructuring, and a lack of alignment between the selection criteria and labour market needs.

But increasingly the single most important determinant of their potential for successful economic integration is the state of their language and communication skills.

Preliminary Research Findings

Recent research also reports that fully 60% of new arrivals are not in jobs using their prior education and experience, though some classes are doing better than others. Interestingly, refugees are doing somewhat better than other economic categories, partly because they are accessing existing services such as ESL.

A higher percentage of recent immigrants is also going back to school than their Canadian counterparts, and when employers see recent Canadian training as a 'top-up' to their earlier education they are often predisposed to hire immigrants

The research also reveals that more refugees and Family Class members are staying in Canada than Economic Class applicants. In fact, if a low income is avoided in their first year, the likelihood of their achieving a satisfactory income level remains positive. And although 34 to 41 per cent have exited low-income status after one year, approximately one-third are still in low income jobs after three years.

As for education, recent immigrants aged 18-24 and 25-54 are more likely to be attending school than their Canadian counterparts. In planning for better economic integration, it is becoming clear that many services for immigrants, such as early interventions, language programs, the development of social networks and topping up of prior education appear to be working in their favour.

Options for Intervention

While the issues around immigration policy and social and economic integration are complex, Alboim identifed three pathways for dealing with the challenges:

1. Focus on the immigrants themselves.
2. Focus on programs and services.
3. Focus on systems and attitudes of the host society and its institutions.

The first involves considerations about levels of immigrants, the mix and the source countries, and the selection criteria related to language, age, education, credentials and occupations.

The second involves providing programs and services needed to bridge the gaps faced by immigrants both before and after arrival. This entails providing improved information for immigrants, assessment of their prior qualifications, language and 'bridge' training for professionals, mentorships, work experience programs and loans.

The third encompasses the roles of regulatory bodies, employers, schools, universities, community colleges and community agencies. These include awareness and recognition of skills, cross-cultural and anti-racism training, support and incentives, as well as legislation.

(Continued on page 57)

(Continued from page 56)

It also calls for intergovernmental collaboration among federal, provincial and municipal jurisdictions.

Challenges

Alboim cited the challenge presented by the fact that there is no national framework for addressing issues such as the provincial nominee program. There are, instead, 11 federal and provincial agreements, such as the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), with different criteria, costs and processes.

While these may respond to regional labour force needs, there are no caps on numbers and limited evaluation of their efficacy at present, even though the program is growing significantly, with 17,095 in 2007.

Ontario's Provincial Nominee Program is very small at present (500) with only 20 occupations listed.

Another challenge relates to post-secondary institutions, where a gradual increase of International Students has occurred, with 64,636 entries in 2007, 21,476 of whom came to Ontario and 11,939 to Toronto.

These students provide a workforce on and off campus, both during their period of study and after graduation. They form a pool of excellent potential immigrants.

However, their credentials, language, and integration costs are borne by themselves and their post-secondary institutions and they are not eligible for LINC services.

There are also concerns that the program may attract non-students and occupy places in post-secondary institutions at the expense of domestic students.

When it comes to the immigration of Temporary Foreign Workers (TFWs), the numbers are increasing dramatically; in 2007, there were 115,470 entries.

In fact, in 2007 the provinces of Newfoundland and Alberta and the Territories received more Temporary Foreign Workers than immigrants. Some interpret this agenda as being employer-driven, with no caps on numbers or targets.

They point to the fact that these workers receive priority processing in the immigration process, with reduced employer requirements to get approval.

Some critics also claim that they are being used strategically as a labour market tool at the high end, with the danger that employers may use them to fill permanent positions more quickly than with skilled workers. There is some evidence also that TFWs are being using to fill low-skilled and even unskilled jobs.

Other observers express a concern that the TFW program, used inappropriately, could discourage investment in training and the hiring of under- or unemployed permanent residents and citizens of Canada, at suppressed wage levels.

At the low end, vulnerabilities could also result, owing to a lack of enforcement of regulations, dependency on the employer, mobility restrictions and ineligibility for language and settlement services.

Moreover, the introduction of the new Canadian Experience Class entrants (CECs) within the system could potentially lead to transition to permanent residence in Canada only at the high end.

Implications

Over the foreseeable future, Ontario and Toronto will continue to receive fewer permanent skilled workers than other regions because of increased activity by other provinces

(Continued on page 58)

(Continued from page 57)

and the priority processing of Temporary Foreign Workers and Canadian Experience Class entrants (CEC).

Blurring of numbers as between permanent and temporary applicants will also make planning more difficult.

The occupational list proposed for ministerial instructions for Skilled Worker processing will result in a narrower range of skilled workers and will not respond to the longer-term needs of Ontario.

An increased proportion of landings will come from the CEC class, leading to people who will have had no prior access to federal settlement and language programs in the process to permanent residence.

Moreover, increased selection, settlement and language training responsibilities will be expected from provinces, employers and post-secondary institutions, and in the absence of fixing the processing and criteria for skilled workers, employers in Ontario and Toronto will rely more on the Temporary Foreign Worker program, even with its inherent difficulties.

Implications for Language Training

Language and communication skills will continue to be essential in determining who may immigrate to Canada, but may need to be addressed in different ways; for example, by increasing the points in selection criteria for Primary Applicant Skilled Workers and by requiring standardized overseas testing of these workers.

We may also need to increase accountability and employer acceptance, by implementing language training exit tests, and expand eligibility and access for LINC or other language training programs at all CLB levels. Furthermore, we may need to enhance ESL opportunities in post-secondary institutions and workplaces.

And finally, we may need to provide loans or income support for those in language training.

By signaling some of the potential challenges presented by recent federal immigration policies, Alboim set the stage for a useful exchange of ideas and opinions in the panel. □

(Continued on page 59)

3rd Annual TESL Ontario Panel

In its immigration policies...the federal government is still concerned with attracting longer-term citizens to Canada, not just meeting immediate labour market needs.

(Continued from page 58)

At the outset, Wilma Jenkins praised the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement (COIA), signed in November 2005, for the positive effects it has already had on the provision of language and settlement services to newcomers.

It has, moreover, created an opening for an important and continuing discussion on immigration and the roles of various stakeholders in expanding services which help newcomers integrate successfully.

The Agreement has provided a new mechanism for three levels of government (federal, provincial and municipal) to work together in planning the delivery of services.

(Continued on page 60)

Wilma Jenkins's current position is Regional Director, Settlement and Intergovernmental Affairs, Ontario Region and she has held this position for the last three years. In this role Wilma has line responsibility for Toronto and York Settlement Operations and has functional responsibility for the Settlement Program in Ontario. Wilma has spent most of her career with CIC and has 35 years experience in managing immigration programs. She was Director of Immigration at Pearson Airport and has extensive experience in managing complex and high profile files. Wilma graduated from Laurentian University where she majored in French with minors in Economics and Political Science. She is familiar with the immigrant experience having moved here from Scotland as a child.

(Continued from page 59)

Ongoing consultations with stakeholders who developed the original strategic plan continue to guide investment under COIA, and these are helping to address the gaps and issues in settlement and language training.

In its immigration policies, however, the federal government is still concerned with attracting longer-term citizens to Canada, not just meeting immediate labour market needs and in the next year the numbers arriving will remain the same.

COIA Strategic Plan

For the information of the TESL Ontario audience, Jenkins summarized some of the features of the Canada Ontario Immigration Agreement.

The Agreement lays out four strategies to support the successful integration of newcomers:

1. To develop a flexible, coordinated system of settlement services with strong linkages and clear pathways to services that newcomers need, such as language training, labour-market integration and social services.
2. To build on existing services to develop and implement a comprehensive language assessment, referral and training system that assists newcomers to become competent in English or French as quickly as possible.
3. To work with municipalities and federal-provincial government departments to enable partnerships that will integrate newcomers in the economic and social life of Ontario communities.
4. To design, fund and administer settlement and language training programs based on how well they support desired outcomes.

Settlement Programs

The COIA has already resulted in an expansion of settlement programs and services, and through consultations with its primary stakeholders it is addressing gaps and issues.

These include:

- Expansion of settlement workers into School and Library Settlement Partnership Projects.
- Employer engagement initiatives.
- Youth programming projects.
- Addressing underserved areas of the province.
- Pre-arrival services.
- Occasional child care services.
- Working with non-traditional mainstream Service Providers.
- Expansion of settlement programming to increase awareness of language programs.
- Producing videos and other media to share with LINC and ESL sites

Language Training Programs

In the area of language training, the Agreement has set goals for the immediate future, including:

(Continued on page 61)

(Continued from page 60)

- The development of higher LINC levels.
- Specialized employment-related language training, such as Enhanced Language Training and Occupation-Specific Language Training.
- More and smaller LINC literacy classes.
- Expansion of child-minding services, including *Introduction to Infant Care*.

Issues and Actions

Programming is also being introduced to address other issues and needs such as the following:

1. The need for employment-related language training. In this area Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is:

- Sponsoring occupation-specific language training at 14 colleges with 29 ongoing curriculum-development and delivery pilot projects.
- Funding 73 Enhanced Language Training projects, delivered by 50 agencies.
- Co-funding 41 Bridge-to-Work projects with Ontario's Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.
- Developing recommendations for 'in and for' the workplace language programs.

2. The need to build capacity and competency in the teaching profession. Here, CIC is:

- Funding conferences such as the TESL Ontario Conference and higher-level language conferences.
- Issuing a Call for Proposals for projects to provide Professional Development supports and training to English and French Second Language instructors in Ontario.
- Developing projects that include:
  - Training for instructors in teaching 'soft' skills, workplace communication and intercultural communication.
  - Training to strengthen competency to deliver language in and for the workplace.
  - Resources and training for the teaching of literacy to newcomers

3. The need to strengthen coordination across federal and provincial training programs. To address this aspect, CIC is:

- Working closely with the province to strengthen coordination through the COIA Language Training Working Group.
- Collaborating with the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to develop calls for proposals.
- Funding conferences (CIC is

(Continued on page 62)

(Continued from page 61)

funding 800 seats at the TESL Ontario conference).

- Assessing eligible clients in provincial Specialized Language Training Pilot projects.
- Sharing tools and resources developed for teachers.

4. The need for alternative delivery approaches. To address this issue, CIC has taken the following initiatives:

- Increased home study seats to 800.
- Funded the development of resources for LINC and ESL teachers in Ontario, including interactive and online activities.
- Developed online language training in French at LINC level 3-4.
- Developed recommendations, through the Language Training Working Group, on alternative delivery approaches.

5. The need for more targeted language training. CIC is coordinating plans for:

- Implementing new programming options through existing operational CAs as well as through the new Call for Proposal process in 2009-2010.
- Developing youth-focused programming.
- Implementing a program for LINC for late life learning.
- LINC tutoring.
- Language in the Workplace programs.

6. The need for consistent measurement of learner achievement. This need is being addressed by exploring options for standardized exit tests in LINC which will:

- Enhance the ability to assess newcomer language learning outcomes and address COIA Strategy 4.
- Allow CIC and stakeholders to assess what is working and to share best practices.
- Give students confidence in their progress.
- Enhance the acceptance and marketability of LINC training to potential employers.

In carrying out its mandates, CIC has increased the number of its agreements by 61 per cent, increased the number of LINC Service Providers by 13 per cent and the number of LINC classes by 52 per cent.

As indicators of its success, the year-to-date enrolments in 2008 are 14 per cent over last year and the LINC Home Study seats have increased 33 per cent. In addition, the provisions of the Agreement have led to 73 Enhanced Language Training projects delivered by over 50 agencies.

Overall, the COIA has been successful in Ontario, said Jenkins, and as CIC works for more provincial and municipal participation in implementing its goals it anticipates continued dialogue and meaningful response to the challenges. □

(Continued on page 63)

3rd Annual TESL Ontario Panel

Education and training play a crucial role in improving the economic prospects of Ontario's newcomers and enhancing their integration.

(Continued from page 62)

This presentation focused on how the various stakeholders and key partners have worked together and will continue to do so in helping to integrate Ontario's newcomers. The stakeholders include federal, provincial and territorial governments, employers, educational institutions, municipal governments, community organizations and agencies, and others.

The Changing Immigration Picture

Catherine Finlay underlined some of the economic components of the immigration picture alluded to earlier in the panel. Overall, the economic outcomes for newcomers have been declining in Ontario since 2000. In fact, immigrants had lower income rates in the period 2000 – 2004 than in the decade earlier. Furthermore, it is now taking longer for immigrants to catch up to their Canadian-born counterparts. What is the cost to the Canadian econ-

(Continued on page 64)

Catherine Finlay had been in her position for only one week when she participated in the 3rd annual Panel discussion. She had very recently taken over the position of Director of Programs within the Immigration Branch at the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Her responsibilities include the Provincial Nominee Program, Global Experience Ontario, Adult non-Credit English and French as a Second Language, Settlement and Bridge to Work programs.

She has had an extensive and diverse career in the Ministries of Health, Consumer and Business Services and Government Services in operations, policy development, and strategic planning and communications. As a Director at ServiceOntario, Catherine successfully championed numerous business and service transformations. One of her career highlights was leading a transformation strategy to reduce birth certificate processing times from over five months to as little as five days 'from desktop to doorstop' – all with an innovative money back guarantee. She gives great importance to building and maintaining positive relationships within her own organization, and with ministry partners and stakeholders.

(Continued from page 63)

omy of unemployed or underemployed new immigrants? The best estimate is $3.4 billion to $5 billion per year.

Where Ontario's Immigrants Come From

2007	1988
India	Hong Kong
China	India
Philippines	Poland
Pakistan	Philippines
U.S.A.	China

In terms of language abilities, in 1988 54% arrived in Canada with some knowledge of English or French. In contrast, in 2007 about 69% had a working knowledge of English. The pattern of immigrants arriving with some facility in English is thus changing, pointing to two future needs:

1. More advanced language training programs.
2. More occupation-specific language training.

Finlay filled out other features of the demographic picture through graphs detailing the education levels of Ontario's new arrivals. In 2007, approximately 44 per cent of new arrivals had a university degree. 33 per cent had a secondary school education or less, 10 per cent had a non-university certificate or diploma, and about 11 per cent had a formal trade certificate or apprenticeship training.

Achieving Positive Outcomes for Newcomers to Ontario

Education and training play a crucial role in improving the economic prospects of Ontario's newcomers and enhancing their integration into Canadian, and while Ontario still gets the majority of immigrants to Canada, that share is declining. The message, however, is clear: Ontario must be able to compete with the other jurisdictions, notably Alberta, BC, Manitoba and the Atlantic provinces.

Finlay described the funding arrangements for settlement and language training services. The COIA has earmarked $920 million over five years in new federal funding for settlement and language training services. That funding is in addition to CIC's base settlement funding of $108 million a year. This amounts to a total of $1.5 billion in federal funding over five years. In addition, since 2003, Ontario has invested more than $600 million in innovative programs and services for newcomers.

Ontario's focus

Ontario's priorities are focused on these five areas:

1. Attraction initiatives and pre-arrival services for newcomers.
2. Coordinated settlement services.
3. A comprehensive language training system.
4. Labour market integration.
5. Community and employer engagement.

(Continued on page 65)

(Continued from page 64)

Barriers to Employment

Newcomers often face barriers in getting a job which matches their skills and qualifications. These include limited proficiency in occupation-specific language, challenges in integrating into the work environment stemming from characteristics of the workplace culture, limited communication skills, lack of Canadian work experience, lack of foreign credential recognition, and inadequate or incomplete information about certification or registration requirements.

Given these challenges, a crucial priority for the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration of Ontario (MCI) is the labour market integration of newcomers at levels which will match their prior experience and education.

As part of the solution to this integration, the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration is investing in both Adult Non-credit ESL and EFL programs and Citizenship and Language Training (CL) programs. It is also investing in occupation-specific language training through specialized language training pilots and bridge training programs.

Specialized Language Training Pilots

Pilot programs in Language Training *for* the Workplace have been established to assist immigrants who want to work in a specific economic sector but require sector-specific specialized language training skills. The range of occupational sectors includes accounting, business, finance, engineering, health care and information technology.

Language Training *in* the Workplace pilot programs are assisting immigrants already in the workforce by providing ESL/EFL language upgrades or improvements. In these pilots, most of the language training takes place at the employer's worksite.

There are encouraging signs of their efficacy, as some employers are beginning to recognize their participating employees' accomplishments through graduation ceremonies, photos in their newsletters, certificates and recognition in their performance reviews.

In Bridge Training programs, MCI is funding the development and testing of new approaches to help internationally-trained persons achieve licensure and/or employment that matches their skills, education and experience.

Since 2003, Ontario has provided approximately $85 million for 145 projects, serving over 20,000 internationally-trained individuals in over 100 professions and trades. Many of these bridge training projects offer a higher-level language training component, including sector and occupation-specific language training, technical language training, workplace communication skills, cultural diversity training and business writing and presentation skills.

In the final analysis, successful integration of Ontario's immigrants requires collaboration among many stakeholders, but at the centre of the picture are the newcomers themselves. □

(Continued on page 66)

3rd Annual TESL Ontario Panel

Many aspects of the literacy and basic skill programming are as relevant to second language students as they are to LBS students.

(Continued from page 65)

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities funds the delivery of ESL and FSL courses and programs through each of the 24 Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs).

The level of post-admission service available to college students requiring language training is dependent on the college's size, the ESL and FSL populations and other demographic features.

In 2005, 8.6 per cent of first-year full-time registrants in post-secondary programs at Ontario's colleges were landed immigrants or refugees. Of this group, 31 per cent were 30 years of age or older and 58 per cent reported a mother tongue that was neither English or French.

To participate in the Literacy and Basic Skills (LBS) programs, however, learners are

(Continued on page 67)

Currently Patti Redmond holds the position of Director of the Programs Branch with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The Programs Branch brings combined employment and training and postsecondary expertise to the practical work of program design, program development, program standards, and program evaluation. It also helps link policy directions with operations and service delivery.

Previously she was the Director of the Skills Investment Branch at MTCU where she had responsibility for adult literacy programs and employment programs for youth and adults, including those who have been internationally-trained. Prior to this, Patti worked for several years at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in the area of social housing development and administration.

(Continued from page 66)

required to have spoken facility in English or French.

The LBS intake interview assesses whether a learner will be able to cope with the language of instruction used in classes.

Newcomers who do not meet this requirement are referred to ESL and EFL programs. In communities not serviced by such programs, LBS agencies will accept newcomers requiring language training.

Because most LBS programs are centred around the Essential Skills needed for various transition paths (such as employment, post-secondary education, credit toward the Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD), apprenticeship, and independence), many aspects of the literacy and basic skill programming are as relevant to second language students as they are to LBS students.

With these factors in mind, an interministerial committee was formed to provide direction for improved policy alignment and coordination of programs and services for adult learners across the range of programs available. The objective is to help adult learners move more easily between one form of training and another.

The ministry's goal is to develop an adult education, literacy and language training curriculum and assessment framework tailored to adult learners' needs and abilities, enabling them to access higher-level programs.

As part of this endeavour, the ministries are working toward a common set of assessment principles among programs which will enable adult learners to move more easily among education, training and employment programs using the Essential Skills as a common language of assessment tool.

Common Assessment Approach

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's (HRSDC) Essential Skills have been identified as a key element of a common assessment approach. They represent the skills that adults need for work, for learning and for life.

In the case of second language learners, the common assessment approach builds upon the links between the Essential Skills and the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLBs), and the support for Essential Skills built into the LINC curriculum. It also builds on the recently completed Common Assessment Project which tested assessment tools based on the Essential Skills, on the Ontario Skills Passport, the Learner Skill Attainment initiative and the Adult Literacy Curriculum initiative.

Assessment in literacy and basic skills is currently based on a set of Learning Outcomes, but these are not well understood by stakeholders outside the LBS Program, such as employers and providers of further training. This is pointing towards the need for a common language of assessment, based on HRSDC's Essential Skills.

Through the Learner Skill Attainment (LSA) initiative, it was found that clients of Employment Ontario who come to the LBS Program choose one or more of the following five transition paths: foundations for independence, employment, credit study towards an OSSC, college level post-secondary study or apprenticeship.

(Continued on page 68)

(Continued from page 67)

Adult Literacy Curriculum

Research has shown that there is a common core of Essential Skills that enables adults to successfully function in the workplace, the classroom and the community and 'learn how to learn' in order to be flexible and adaptable in response to change.

The Adult Literacy Curriculum 'package' which is in development will consist of a core of Essential Skills, the complementary LSA assessment framework, and the materials exemplars that support the LBS practitioner in the instructional setting.

A draft curriculum package will be field-tested with full implementation beginning in January 2011. The collaboration on the development of the Adult Literacy Curriculum by the Ministries of Education, Citizenship and Immigration and Training, Colleges and Universities, is intended to enhance learner pathways among the programs offered by the three ministries.

Employment Ontario Transformation

Employment Ontario (EO) connects new Ontarians looking for work with employers who are looking for workers through such programs as Job Connect and Employment Assistance Services, among others.

Their vision is for Ontario to have "the most educated people and highly skilled workforce in North America in order to build the province's competitive advantage". EO provides service descriptions and assistance online and over the phone in 25 languages as well as support to cover training needs, credential recognition, and literacy and basic skills. In addition it provides referrals to other services outside the EO network, such as ESL and FSL programs.

Employment Ontario's promise is to provide effective, relevant training and employment services, a single access point based on individual needs and labour market demands, effective response to the needs of employers, job seekers, apprentices, new Canadians and others, and service excellence and satisfaction.

Recent layoffs in the auto and forestry sectors of Ontario's economy reveal a strong need for retraining. In fact some affected clients do not have the foundational skills of literacy or a functional command of English. In the apprenticeship sector, there is also an increased need for skilled tradespersons, but here again the needs of the trades are changing, as most now require stronger literacy skills. Employment Ontario's goal is to help such people access the pathways they need in order to succeed.

Future Directions and Emerging Issues

The Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities will continue to work towards policy and program coherence and improved integrated service delivery. Their goals include improving assessment of clients' needs and ensuring that training is targeted to those needs. The focus is on performance measurement and results for clients participating in training, and alignment in both training and education to their employability in good jobs with a livable wage. □

(Continued on page 69)

3rd Annual TESL Ontario Panel

During the 2007-08 school year, the Ministry of Education (EDU) invested $1.7 million in 14 pilot projects aimed at increasing adult learner success.

(Continued from page 68)

With a focus on adult education, Pauline McNaughton spoke to the importance of encouraging those who had left school to come back and continue their education. Significant among its initiatives, the Ministry of Education has engaged in a number of exploratory projects aimed specifically at adult second language learners.

Adult Education Pilot Projects

During the 2007-08 school year, the Ministry of Education (EDU) invested $1.7 million in 14 pilot projects aimed at increasing

(Continued on page 70)

Pauline McNaughton has worked in the field of adult education for over 25 years, most of it involved with adult ESL/FSL. Currently she is Manager of the Adult Education Policy Unit, Student Success/ Learning to 18 Strategic Policy Branch. The Adult Education Policy Unit reports to both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, and works closely with the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration. Prior to this Pauline was the Executive Director at the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks for six years.

(Continued from page 69)

adult learner success by:

- Recognizing newcomers' first languages for high school credit, in eight pilot sites.
- Finding better ways to recognize adult learners' skills and knowledge through common assessment, in 3 three pilot sites.
- Exploring effective local partnerships between school boards and community agencies, local organizations and colleges to provide flexible learning opportunities for adult learners, in three pilot sites.
- Increasing access to information on programs and services through Employment Ontario, to support informed program choice, in all 14 sites

McNaughton elaborated on the first of the pilot projects. Its objectives are to explore ways of making it easier for adult newcomers to earn credits in Farsi, Tamil, Punjabi, Mandarin, Arabic, Spanish and Russian, toward a high school diploma.

In addition, the project is seeking to demonstrate the value of partnering with local community agencies serving newcomers and to demonstrate ways of making local policies, procedures and protocols more welcoming to adult newcomers.

The pilot programs are situated in seven communities receiving the highest number of newcomers annually, including Peel and York Regions, Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, Windsor and Kitchener-Waterloo.

The partners in the pilot include 11 English school boards, two French school boards, 11 settlement service organizations, the Independent Learning Centre, and World Education Services.

The completion date was July 31, 2008. The deliverables include locally-developed marketing resources, language challenge assessments and guidelines, exploration of electronic delivery methods of assessment and final project reports with recommendations for wider provincial application.

The preliminary findings from the pilot project are encouraging. For example, there is a more consistent application of assessment practices in implementing Policy and Program Memorandum 132, concerning Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition for Mature Students. New tools have also been developed to aid in the comparison of Grade 11/12 curriculum equivalencies with other Canadian jurisdictions, and improved data have been assembled on effective local practices.

The next steps include summary reports that were presented to the provincial stakeholders, Ministry and provincial feedback on the project and evaluation reports, and a report on the final results to the Ministers' Committee on Adult Education.

Experience and evidence from the pilot projects will inform longer-term work on policy alignment and coordination, including accessibility and inclusion for all adults, coordination and integration between and among programs and levels of government, innovation and flexibility in meeting learner and community needs and accountability and effectiveness in using public resources.

(Continued on page 71)

(Continued from page 70)

Publications

The last three years have seen the publication of important new documents introducing new policies for English Language Learners in ESL and ELD programs for K-12 levels and new curriculum guidelines for English as a Second and English Literacy Development at the secondary school level.

Furthermore, recent publications such as *Many Roots Many Voices* (2005), *Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten* (2007), *Supporting English Language Learners with Limited Prior Schooling* (2008) and *TIPS for English Language Learners of Mathematics* (2007) have met with support from teachers and supervisors.

Coming up are various projects related to second language learners in different boards of education across the province, and a new document, *Supporting English Language Learners in Grades 1 to 8: A Practical Guide for Ontario educators* in addition to *STEP* – an assessment resource for teachers. □

Q and A session

The third annual panel session allowed attendees to pose questions and bring forth concerns arising out of the panelists' presentations. Here is a sampling of the queries and responses:

Q ***There are increasing questions about the reliability and validity of the Canadian Language Benchmarks. Does it seem sensible to proceed in that direction?***

A The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is constantly looking for better ways to assess language acquisition and use. Moreover, the CLB assessment instruments are criterion-referenced assessments and were developed primarily for placement in language training programs. They were developed for specific purposes and as such do not and cannot meet all assessment needs.

Q ***What are some of the implications of the labour force statistics presented this morning, particularly that the replacement of workers in our economy will be largely through immigration by 2011?***

A Well, at the simplest level, the statistics simply mean we're getting older and having fewer babies. (*General laughter.*) But seriously, Canada is not alone in this. Europe and the U.S. and Australia and New Zealand are experiencing the same demographic shifts. However, the studies are also showing that once immigrants come to Canada they are having fewer children here than in their home countries, too.

Q ***Some of our language training programs, such as the Bridging Programs, are not open to Canadian citizens who could benefit from them. Some people interpret this as a sort of 'punishment' for citizenship. Do you have an opinion about that?***

A We need to think carefully about access to all programs. We should avoid forcing people to decide between citizenship or not as they seek to better their lives. ■

Technology overload for language teachers

By John Allan

Integrating technology into language teaching is a stated goal of most language learning institutions nowadays. This is an inventory of technology and how you might use it in an ESL environment.

At my former college in the Gulf region, a series of "Web 2.0" and language teaching workshops was offered over the past few years to the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching staff. The series was designed to provide guidance on using the new social media tools with their students.

Interestingly, the sessions were not fully booked and attendance was mediocre. Meanwhile, our specialized teaching development centre had also offered workshops on blogging, podcasting and wikis. These were also poorly attended.

As a result of these experiences a few of the staff took an informal, non-scientific survey. For this purpose we did not use technology such as an online survey, but decided

(Continued on page 73)

(Continued from page 72)

simply to ask teachers informally about their reasons for not attending the sessions.

Many teachers felt that they were at the end of their careers, so learning about new, cutting-edge tools was not a part of their professional plan. A few believed they would not use these new tools as they did not use computers at all in their classes. However, the majority reported that they were simply overwhelmed with technology. These teachers did not want to take on another set of tools that they could not easily master.

For some of us this was not completely shocking news, as staff members spend much of their time in offices staring at computers when they are not actually teaching. However, the workshops had been designed to introduce them to new methods for delivering their lessons and to guide them in doing so. It appeared, however, that the new tools, rather than inspiring, seemed to be depressing staff members to the point where they developed avoidance strategies.

Nonetheless, integrating technology into language teaching is a stated goal of most language learning institutions nowadays, both in Ontario and abroad. For example, the document, *A Software Guide for the LINC Classroom*, by Rajabi and Witol (2000) provides guidance for LINC instructors on Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Word, Explore Canada, ELLIS, and Tense Buster as well as Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) techniques to teach pronunciation, writing, grammar, listening and speaking.

Adult learning centers across Ontario are encouraged, even mandated, to install computer labs like those cited above in order to make technology an *essential* element in the LINC training scheme. And although many centers have a dedicated CALL lab specialist, often ESL instructors are left on their own to learn how to integrate applications effectively into their instructional repertoire. What follows is an inventory of technological applications, a summary of their purposes and features and a description of the demands they place on those expected to use them in second language teaching environments.

Administrators may find the inventory useful as they consider the expectations and responsibilities placed on their colleagues in the classroom. In short, the inventory may help answer the question: are ESL teachers becoming buried by an overabundance of technology?

Learning Management Systems

Learning management systems (LMSs), sometimes known as 'virtual learning environments', allow for the overall management and delivery of both online and blended (online and face-to-face combined) learning experiences. Increasingly, they are used both in Canada and abroad.

Characteristically, they present learning activities in the form of interactive quizzes, digital lectures, asynchronous forums, synchronous chats, democratic polls, electronic drop boxes and roughly a dozen more features. Three well known LMSs are **BlackBoard** (formerly WebCT), **Desire to Learn** and **Moodle**.

Language teachers who use LMSs are usually responsible for managing the class data as well as monitoring interactive activities such as chats and facilitating the students through the course as well. Using online technology such as an LMS requires training in remote teaching pedagogy as well as the individual tools involved in the course itself.

(Continued on page 74)

(Continued from page 73)

Computer- Assisted Language Learning

CALL software modules are specifically designed to help language students acquire and practice their target language, and there are now hundreds of CALL titles available. In the Ontario context, the LINC guide of 2000 referred to earlier offers three: **Ellis**, **Tense Buster** and (arguably) **Explore Canada.**

In many early CALL applications involving multimedia, the instructor had to manage features such as volume, audio input, screen resolution as well as hardware issues such as headsets, microphones and screen cameras. Though a a lot of these demands have disappeared, much of the older technology is still present in learning sites.

To integrate available and emerging technology effectively, however, each institution should have dedicated staff to facilitate CALL learning situations through instructional design, training and in-person support. Frequently, however, this is not the case, and many ESL teachers are left on their own to learn, develop and teach with CALL. The most common teacher reaction in that case is to do the bare minimum required by the workplace circumstances.

Assistive applications

Over the course of a teaching career all of us have worked with special needs students. Assistive software and hardware present improved learning conditions for special needs students and the staff. For example, speech recognition applications will type text for those who cannot type for themselves.

Text-to-speech applications provide dyslexic or visually impaired students access to digital documents. There are other examples of assistive applications such as magnified text, monochrome schemes and flashing screens to indicate an alert. In these situations many, if not most, teachers must rely on a specialist for assistance, or take the time to work through this technology with their student to achieve their goals.

Office Applications

Office suites or document editing software are the most common tools used by language teachers. Every ESL teacher is familiar with worksheets, reports and official correspondence they have created with **Microsoft Word** and **WordPerfect.** But while most teachers can manipulate word processors, the further leap to spreadsheets and databases requires more concerted effort.

(Here we are referring to instructors relatively new to the digital world, but at the present time they are the norm in the teaching ranks. In the future, when 'digital natives' begin to enter the teaching ranks in larger numbers, this will not be an issue.)

At present, many ESL administrators assume that the average instructor can use spreadsheets and presentation software efficiently. However, conferences like those presented by TESL Ontario are an interesting indicator of the mismatch of administrators' expectations and teachers' realities. Many teachers are still attending workshops to acquire basic computer skills already assumed by many administrators to be a part of the language instructor's skill set.

(Continued on page 75)

(Continued from page 74)

Self-Paced training

Interactive online training modules for using technology are now freely available on the Internet. In order to create a culture of ongoing training, some institutions purchase a license to packages of training components. These can be used in two modes: just-in-time as required, or sequentially. But while self-paced, individual training works for highly-motivated and technically savvy employees, they are often a minority amongst the staff. For many teachers, online training is often simply not an effective replacement for face-to-face workshops with practical hands-on experience.

Recently at my workplace, for example, we were sent an Internet address and given a user name and password to access a training program. That was it! The rest was up to us. This is an approach that digital natives might be comfortable with, but many of my colleagues simply ignored the email.

Human Resources Applications

This type of software is now used in all industries, including education. It allows for numerous tasks related to human resource issues, and the applications provide services that inform and track issues such as salary, vacation allotments, pension funds, scheduling, and seniority. At present, teachers' familiarity with these applications is often not highly developed.

Grade books

Dedicated digital grade books are rapidly replacing hand-written reports and teacher-assembled spreadsheets. Grade books are essentially elaborate spreadsheets with embedded equations that try to relieve teachers from the laborious task of record keeping. Issues with electronic grade books often arise for teaching staff, however, when they try to alter something as simple as an assessment weighting, change individual graded items, coordinate a shared grade book with team teachers or submit the final grades to the school's registration system. It is therefore common for staff to use an e-grade book only to print out the final grade, sign it by hand and submit a paper copy to a coordinator.

Data storage and management

Data is stored and retrieved from servers directly or in content management systems. These are often known to teachers as "the server," **Joomla!**, "the portal" or **SharePoint**. In order to locate relevant files for their teaching, assessment and administrative requirements of their jobs, however, teachers need to be familiar with the applications' navigational paths. And from time to time, teachers may be required to upload, update or reorganize files on a share server. These tasks require institution-specific permission, passwords and file naming standards – all demanding training for ordinary teachers.

Internet resources

This can be a large source of anxiety for many language teachers. The anxiety arises from the fact that while the internet potentially offers so much, many things can go wrong during learning sessions with students.

Problems such as misspelled ad-

(Continued on page 76)

(Continued from page 75)

dresses, inappropriate content, poor connections, blocked access, system crashes, unplugged or loose wires, out-of-date plug-ins, lack of administrative privilege and antiquated hardware can lead ESL instructors to avoid using the World Wide Web with their students.

But the frustration felt by both instructors and students is often compounded by the Internet resources themselves. There are websites on which the content is simply outdated or unfinished or which offer only one or two thin layers of learning activity. In addition, some very useful internet sites are simply out of reach for a learning site with budgetary constraints.

Moreover, the three main rival web browsers, **FireFox, Explorer** and **Opera** all require additional software components called plug-ins to unlock their potential. To use them successfully, teachers often need to learn the details of which browser will work with which site . This takes time and effort.

Media editors

Media editors have the capacity to sequence and optimize mixed media to create effective 'learning objects.' What is a media-based learning object? It can be a video, an audio track, an animation or a combination of all these, along with an interactive quiz. For most language teachers, creating and use such objects requires a high level of complex knowledge. The majority of ESL teachers at this point are not able to use tools such as **Audacity**, **Windows Movie Maker**, **iMovie** or **Flash** although many of their students can. In fact, the closest that many instructors come to this capability is using the interactive features provided by the buttons in **PowerPoint**. Creating functional and relevant multimedia takes years of technical and instructional design training and experience. It's no wonder that teachers feel overwhelmed.

Audiovisual equipment

Most lecture halls or computer labs have a teacher podium with a workstation or laptop linkage connected to an audiovisual component system. This system is hardware-based and can be quite confusing to the average instructor. If one teacher switches a setting or even takes the drastic step of altering connectors to achieve optimum performance for their session but forgets to return the system to its standard configuration, the next instructor may not have the use of the data projector or the classroom speakers at all.

To confuse the situation further, a remote control and the computer software may adjust settings and performance of the audio and video for the class. Teachers therefore always need to have a Plan B strategy up their sleeve, a fallback lesson that often avoids technology altogether. For many teachers then, creating the two approaches doubles their planning and calls the use of technology into question.

Electronic whiteboards

Electronic whiteboards allow an instructor to write ideas on a board and have the students download the draft notes to their laptops. They can also project their computer screen on a board and interact with that screen on the whiteboard and apply many other ingenious techniques. The training and technical support for these machines takes

(Continued on page 77)

(Continued from page 76)

considerable time and energy. Invariably, the training of language teachers in the effective use of electronic whiteboards also entails classroom management issues, technical connectivity, troubleshooting and more 'plan B' strategies.

Image editors

Many teachers create worksheets or web content that includes static visuals in the form of illustrations, photographs or clip art. In order to insert these into office suite software, the images appear better if they are optimized. Optimization can include a variety of functions such as cropping, resizing, applying filters, adding frames, adding captions, rotating, altering the resolution or touching up with paint tools. Once again, these skills take time and effort to acquire.

CD/DVD burners or replicators

Multimedia such as video or audio can be saved and distributed on DVD or CD. Backing up data to a large external hard drive or a server is also an option. One of the most common problems is that computers offer more than one way to save onto these portable media. As well as non-standardization, even machines in the same lab or institution often have different software for similar jobs.

Security

Security should not be an issue for a teacher, but it often is. At smaller centres or on stand-alone workstations security software often runs on a predefined schedule. Teachers and students can be confused if they are prompted to authorize a software update or run a status check if some threat is detected. This also adds a new level of stress if teachers are not trained in how to operate the security software. **Norton**, **AVG** or **McAfee** are common security software brands, and they have distinct features. Learning one does not mean that you understand the others.

Communications

Most institutions require that employees use email communications instead of a paper memo system. Email systems are relatively simple to use if you have previous experience. But most email software now includes a calendar, appointment and meeting booking, archiving, contacts list and other features that require time to learn. In addition, some workplaces encourage chat or messenger communication. Software IP phones that allow you to make phone calls via the computer are becoming more popular. They combine an on-screen menu with a headset and microphone. They may require learning a start-up and connection routine before use. Also, teachers often balk at powering up a computer and launching an application just to make a telephone call.

"Web 2.0"

This is jargon for the latest set of tools that the Internet offers to encourage social interaction, participation in creating content and building community. There are a few well-known examples such as **YouTube**, **Flickr**, **MySpace**, **DIGG** and **Wikipedia**. Digital natives thrive in this arena, and in fact, most students in secondary school can easily guide their teachers through this maze of online communities. However, there are few trainers

(Continued on page 78)

(Continued from page 77)

and resources in the market dedicated to applying these technologies to second language education, and it remains a daunting zone for ESL/EFL instructors.

Mobile devices

The iPhone, Blackberry and iPod are currently not common in education sites, but ventures such as "iTunes and U" from Apple are already beginning to push portable and pervasive learning more firmly into the ESL/EFL consciousness.

Paper generators

Under this heading we can include photocopiers, fax machines, printer-scanners and multi-function machines. Photocopiers are familiarly frustrating, due to the frequency of mechanical failure. Newer models of these devices have added security codes, emailing of documents, scanning, linking to computer networks and colour copying. Each of these adds a new layer of complexity to a workspace. Colour laser copying also depends on replaceable cartridges containing noxious substances. While the menus on modern photocopiers are friendly enough, they represent yet another set of instructions for people to become familiar with. Then, when the photocopier is upgraded or replaced, these menus often change.

Technology Relief

Is there any relief from technology overload for instructional staff? Proper training for instructional and support staff will provide some, but training must be planned and provided in different modes: face-to-face, reference and just-in-time. The most effective training should be available at the instructor's request, but this is often not economically viable. And in order to train its staff in new technologies, an institution may need to subtract hours from instructional workloads.

When administrators plan technology upgrading, they need to keep training resources such as animated movies, digital documents, help files and paper manuals up-to-date and available to the staff.

Guest speakers with sessions related to practical applications of these technologies for administrative or pedagogical purposes may also need to be brought in to assist the staff. Attendance at conference sessions, whether online or in person, may also provide teachers a measure of relief for technology overload.

In solving some of the problems presented by technology overload, administrators are well advised to take inventories of the technology demands on all staff members and devise plans to decrease these by eliminating technologies or assigning specialized tasks to individual teachers.

The best-case scenario would appear to be a dedicated instructional technology team located at the institution. Each time a technology is upgraded, technology overload can then be lessened with a fresh training session. Training can also be arranged in cycles to review and introduce new technologies and related instructional practices. A system such as this would take a great deal of front-end planning; however it would make the technology work more effectively for the organization in the future.

All of these support measures require funding, and at this time of recession these requests may be too quickly denied. Adminis-

(Continued on page 79)

(Continued from page 78)

trators, however, need to acknowledge that improving teachers' confidence in using technology will improve the level of instruction at the institution, and if the organization has already spent large amounts of money on technology, it is incumbent on them to see that the outlay has led to technology which is used both efficiently and effectively.

Conclusion

It is no wonder that the staff did not fill the seats at the "Web 2.0" workshops at my institution this academic year. They were and are suffering from technology overload. They work in environments where expectations are too high, where comprehensive training schemes to master the growing layers of technology are absent, practice time with new technology is inadequate, where institutions lack proper support staff, forcing instructors to do their own trouble shooting and finally because of the sheer amount of technology that institutions now have on hand.

In this inventory I have not even mentioned technologies such as **Second Life** or other virtual 3D online worlds, eportfolios, RSS feeds, WebQuests, schedulers, listserves among others. The list seems endless, but what is certain is that without adequate training and information exchange the great potential of technology will be unrealized in ESL and EFL. ■

References

Rajabi, Sharon and Pat Witol. (2000). *A Software Guide for the LINC Classroom*. Toronto District Catholic School Board. Funded by Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

John Allan has been involved in the TESOL profession for more than 20 years as a teacher, writer, presenter and materials developer. His interests include blending a variety of technologies with education.